

(6)
CARACTACUS,

A

DRAMATIC POEM:

Written on the MODEL of

The Ancient GREEK Tragedy.

By W. MASON, Author of ELFRIDA.

Misimus & lectas Druidum de gente Chorēas.

U B L I N.

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CHARACTERS

AT

DRAMATIC FORM

THE ART OF THE POET

The Ancient Greek Tragedy



OF THE

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T O

The Rev^d Mr. H U R D.

E L E G Y.

FRRIEND of my youth, who, when the willing Muse
Stream'd o'er my breast her warm poetic rays,

Saw & the fresh seeds their vital powers diffuse,

And feed'd them with the soft'ning dew of praise!

Whate'er the produce of th' unthrifty soil,

The leaves, the flowers, the fruits, to thee belong:

The labourer earns the wages of his toil;

Who form'd the Poet, well may claim the song,

Yes, 'tis my pride to own, that, taught by thee,

My conscious soul superior flights essay'd;

Learnt from thy lore the Poet's dignity,

And spurn'd the hirelings of the rhyming trade.

Say, scenes of Science, say, thou haunted stream!

[For oft my Muse-led steps didst thou behold]

How on thy banks I rifled every theme,

That Fancy fabled in her age of gold.

How oft I cry'd, " O come, thou tragic Queen !

" March from thy Greece with firm majestic tread !

" Such as when Athens saw thee fill her scene,

" When Sophocles thy choral Graces led ;

" Saw thy proud pall it's purple length devolve,

" Saw thee uplift the glitt'ring dagger high,

" Ponder with fixed brow thy deep resolve

" Prepar'd to strike, to triumph, and to die.

" Bring then to Britain's plain that choral throng,

" Display thy buskin'd pomp, thy golden lyre,

" Give her historic forms the soul of song,

" And mingle Attic art with Shakespear's fire."

" Ah what, fond Boy, dost thou presume to claim ?"

The Muse reply'd. " Mistaken suppliant, know,

" To light in Shakespear's breast the dazzling flame

" Exhausted all Parnassus could bestow.

" True ; Art remains, and, if from his bright page

" Thy mimic power one vivid beam can seize,

" Proceed ; and in that best of talks engage,

" Which tends at once to profit, and to please."

She spake ; and Harewood's Towers spontaneous rose ;

Soft virgin warblings eccho'd thro' the grove ;

And fair Elfrida pour'd forth all her woes,

The nuptial pattern of connubial Love.

More awful scenes old Mona next display'd ;

Her caverns gloom'd, her forests wav'd on high,

While flam'd within their consecrated shade

The Genius stern of British liberty.

And see, my HURD ! to thee those scenes consign'd ;

O ! take and stamp them with thy honour'd name.

Around the page be friendship's chaplet twind ;

And if they find the road to honest Fame,

Perchance

Perchance the candour of some nobler age
 May praise the Bard, who bade gay Folly bear
 * Her cheap applauses to the busy stage
 And leave him penive Virtue's silent tear;
 Chose too to consecrate his fav'rite strain
 To Him, who grac'd by ev'ry liberal art,
 That best might shine amid the learned train,
 Yet more excell'd in morals, and in heart:
 Whose equal mind could see vain fortune shower
 Her simzy favours on the fawning crew,
 While in low Thurcaston's sequester'd bower
 She fixt him distant from Promotion's view:
 Yet, shelter'd there by calm Contentment's wing;
 Pleas'd he could smile, and with sage Hooker's eye
 † " See from his mother earth God's blessings spring
 " And eat his bread in peace and privacy."

20th March 1759.

W. MASON.

* Nil equidem feci (tu scis hoc ipse) Theatris;
 Musa nec in plausus ambitiosa mea est.

OVID. Trist. Lib. V. El. vii. 23.

† Part of a sentence in a letter of Hooker to Archbishop Whitgift. See his Life in the Biographia Britannica.

Persons of the DRAMA.

AULUS DIDIUS, the Roman General.

VELLINUS,

} Sons of Carilmandua.

ELIDURUS,

• **CHORUS** of Druids and Bards.

CARACTACUS.

EVILINA, Daughter to Caractacus.

ARVIRAGUS, Son to Caractacus.

SCENE, M O N A.

- The dramatic part of the Chorus is supposed to be spoken by the chief Druid; the lyrical part sung by the Bards.



CARACTACUS,

CARACTACUS,

DRAMATIC POEM.

AULUS DIDIUS, with Romans.

THIS is the secret centre of the isle :
Here, Romans, pause, and let the eye of wonder

Gaze on the solemn scene ; behold yon oak,
How stern he frowns, and with his broad brown arms
Chills the pale plain beneath him : mark yon altar,
The dark stream brawling round its rugged base,
These cliffs, these yawning caverns, this wide circus,
Skirted with unhewn stone : they awe my soul,
As if the very genius of the place
Himself appear'd, and with terrific tread
Stalk'd thro' his drear domain. And yet, my friends,
(If shapea like his be but the fancy's coinage)
Surely there is a hidden power, that reigns
'Mid the lone majesty of untam'd nature,
Controuling sober reason ; tell me else,
Why do these haunts of barb'rous superstition
O'ercome me thus ? I scorn them, yet they awe me.
Call forth the British Princes : in this gloom
I mean to school them to our enterprize.

Enter Vellinus and Elidurus.

AULUS DIDIUS, VELLINUS, ELIDURUS.

Ye pledges dear of Carismandua's faith,
Approach ! and to my uninstructed ear
Explain this scene of horror.

ELIDURUS.

Daring Roman,

Thy footsteps press on consecrated ground :
These mighty piles of magic-planted rock,
Thus rang'd in mystic order, mark the place

8 C A R A C T A C U S.

Where but at times of holiest festival
The Druid leads his train.

AULUS DIDIUS.

Where dwells the seer?

VELLINUS.

In yonder shaggy cave; on which the moon
Now sheds a side-long gleam. His brotherhood
Possess the neighbouring cliffs.

AULUS DIDIUS.

Yet up the hill

Mine eye descries a distant range of caves,
Delv'd in the ridges of the craggy steep
And this way, still another.

ELIDURUS.

On the left

Reside the Sages skill'd in Nature's lore:

The changeful universe, its numbers powers,

Studious they measure, save when meditation

Gives place to holy rites: then in the grove

Each hath his rank and function. Yonder grove

Are tenanted by Bards, who nightly thence

Rob'd in their flowing vels of innocent white,

Descend, with harps that glitter to the moon

Hymning immortal strains. The spirits of air,

Of earth, of water, nay, of heav'n itself,

Do listen to their lay: and oft, 'tis said,

In visible shapes dance they a magic round

To the high minstrelsy. Now, if thine eye

Be fated with the view, haste to thy ships,

And ply thine oars; for, if the Druids learn

This bold intrusion, thou wilt find it hard

To foil their fury.

AULUS DIDIUS.

Prince, I did not moor

My light-arm'd shallops on this dangerous strand,

To sooth a fruitless curiosity:

I come in quest of proud Caractacus;

Who, when our veterans put his troops to flight,

Found refuge here.

ELIDURUS.

If here the Monarch rests,

Presumptuous Chief, thou might'st as well essay

To

C A R A C T A C U S. 99

To pluck him from you stars : Earth's ample range
 Contains no surer refuge : underneath
 The soil we tread, a hundred secret paths, more than
 Scoopt thro' the living rock in winding mazes,
 Lead to as many caverns, dark, and deep
 'Mid which the hoary sages act their rites
 Mysterious, rites of such strange potency,
 As, done in open day, would dim the sun,
 Tho' thron'd in noontide brightness. In such dens
 He may for life lie hid.

AULUS DIDIUS.

We know the task
 Most difficult : yet has thy royal mother
 Furnish'd the means.

ELIDURUS.

My mother sayst thou, Roman ?

AULUS DIDIUS.

In proof of that firm faith she lends to Rome,
 She gave ye up her honour's hostages.

ELIDURUS.

She did : and we submit.

AULUS DIDIUS.

To Rome we bear ye ;
 From your dear country bear ye ; from your joys,
 Your loves, your friendships, all your souls hold precious.

ELIDURUS.

And dost thou taunt us, Roman, with our fate ?

AULUS DIDIUS.

No, Youth, by heav'n, I would avert that fate.
 Wish ye for liberty ?

VELLINUS, ELIDURUS.

More than for life.

AULUS DIDIUS.

And would do much to gain it ?

VELLINUS.

Name the task.

AULUS DIDIUS.

The task is easy. Hail ye to these Druids ;
 Tell them ye come, commission'd by your Queen,
 To seek the great Caractacus ; and call
 His valour to her aid, against the Legions,
 Which, led by our Ostorius, now assail

IO C A R A C T A C U S.

Her frontiers. The late treaty she has seal'd
Is yet unknown : and this her royal signet,
Which more to mask our purpose was obtain'd,
Shall be your pledge of faith. The eager king
Will gladly take the charge : and, he consenting,
What else remains, but to the Meina's shore
Ye lead his credulous step ? there will we seize him :
Bear him to Rome, the substitute for you,
And give you back to freedom.

VELLINUS.

If the Druids—

AULUS DIDIVS.

If they or he, prevent this artifice,
Then force must take it's way : then flaming brands,
And biting axes, wielded by our soldiers,
Must level these thick shades ; and so unlodge
The lurking savage.

ELIDURUS.

Gods, shall Mona perish ?

AULUS DIDIVS

Princes, her ev'ry trunk shall on the ground
Measure it's magnitude ; unless ere dawn,
Ye lure this untam'd lion to our toils.
Go then, and prosper : I shall to the ships,
And there expect his coming. Youths, remember,
He must to Rome to grace great Cæsar's triumph :
Cæsar and Fate demand him at your hands.

Exit Aulus Didius, and Romans.

ELIDURUS, VELLINUS.

And will heav'n suffer it ? Will the just gods,
That tread yon spangled pavement o'er our heads,
Look from their sky and yield them ? Will these Druids,
Their sage vicegerents, not call down the thunder ;
And will not instant it's hot bolts be darted
In such a righteous cause ? Yes, good old king,
Yes, last of Britons, thou art heav'n's own pledge ;
And shalt be such 'till death.

VELLINUS.

What means my brother,
Dost thou refuse the charge ?

ELIDURUS.

Dost thou accept it ?

VELLINUS.

C A R A C T A C U S. 11

VELLINUS.

It gives us liberty.

ELIDURUS.

It makes us traitors.

Gods, would Vellinus do a deed of baseness?

VELLINUS.

Will Elidurus scorn the proffer'd boon
Of freedom?

ELIDURUS.

Yes, when such it's guilty price,
Brother, I spurn it.

VELLINUS.

Go then, foolish boy!

I'll do the deed myself.

ELIDURUS.

It shall not be:

I will proclaim the fraud.

VELLINUS.

Wilt thou? 'tis well.

Hie to yon cave; call loudly on the Druid;

And bid him drag to ignominious death

The partner of thy blood: Yet hope not thou

To 'scape; for thou didst join my impious steps:

Therefore his wrath shall curse thee: thou shalt live,

Yet shalt thou live an interdicted wretch,

All rights of nature cancell'd.

ELIDURUS.

O Vellinus!

Rend not my soul: by heav'n thou know'st I love thee,

As fervently as brother'er lov'd brother:

And, loving thee, I thought I lov'd mine honour.

Ah! do not wake, dear youth, in this true breast

So fierce a conflict.

VELLINUS.

Honour's voice commands

Thou shouldst obey thy mother, and thy queen:

Honour and sage religion both conspire

To bid thee save these consecrated groves

From Roman devastation.

ELIDURUS.

Horrid thought!

Hence let us haste, ev'n to the furthest nook

OF

Of this wide isle; nor view the sacrifice.

VELLINUS.

No, let us stay, and by our prosperous art
Prevent the sacrifice. Mark me, my brother;
More years, and more experience have matur'd
My sober thought; I will convince thy youth,
That this our deed has ev'ry honest sanction
Cool reason may demand.

ELIDURUS.

To Rome with reason:
Try if 'twill bring her deluging ambition
Into the level course of right and justice;
Try if 'twill tame these insolent invaders;
Who thus, in savageness of conquest, claim
Whom chance of war has spard. Do this, and prosper.
But, pray thee, do not reason from my soul:
It's inbred honesty: that holy flame
Howe'er eclips'd by Rome's black influence
In vulgar minds, ought still to glow in ours.

VELLINUS.

Vain talker, leave me.

ELIDURUS.

No, I will not leave thee:
I must not, dare not, in these perilous shades
Think, if thy fraud should fail, these holy men,
How will their justice rend thy trait'rous limbs?
If thou succeed'st, the fiercer pangs of conscience,
How will they ever goad thy guilty soul?
Mercy, defend us! for the awful Druids
Are issuing from their caves: hear'st thou yon signal?
Low on the instant all the mountain whitens
With slow descending Bards. Retire, retire;
This is the hour of sacrifice: to stay
Is death.

VELLINUS.

I'll wait the closing of their eyes
In yonder vale: do thou, as likes thee best,
Betray, or aid me.

ELIDURUS.

To betray thee, youth,
That love forbids; honour, alas! to aid thee.

Exeunt.

Enter

C A R A C T A C U S. 13

Enter CHORUS.
SEMICHORUS.

Sleep and Silence reign around ;
Not a night-breeze wakes to blow ;
Circle, sons, this holy ground ;
Circle close, in triple row :
And, if mask'd in vapors drear,
Any earth-born Spirit dare
To hover round this sacred space,
Haste with light spells the murky foe to chase.
Lift your boughs of vervain blue,
Dipt in cold September dew ;
And dash the moisture chaste, and clear,
O'er the ground, and thro' the air :
Now the place is purg'd and pure.
Brethren ! say, for this high hour
Are the milk-white steers prepar'd ?
Whose necks the rude yoke never scar'd,
To the furrow yet unbroke ?
For such must bleed beneath yon oak.

SEMICHORUS.

Druid, these, in order meet,
Are all prepar'd.

SEMICHORUS.

But tell me yet,
Cadwall ! did thy step profound
Dive into the cavern deep,
Twice twelve fathom under ground,
Where our sage fore-fathers sleep ?
Thence with reverence hast thou borne,
From the consecrated chest,
The golden sickle, scrip, and vest,
Whilom by old Belinus worn ?

SEMICHORUS.

Druid, these, in order meet,
Are all prepar'd.

SEMICHORUS.

But tell me yet.
From the grot of charms and spells,
Where our maion sister dwells,
Brennus ! has thy holy hand
Safely brought the druid wand ?

And

14 C A R A C T A C U S.

And the potent adder-stone,
 Gender'd 'fore th' autumnal moon ?
 When in undulating twine,
 The foaming snakes prolific join ;
 When they hiss, and when they bear
 Their wond'rous egg aloof in air ;
 Thence, before to earth it fall,
 The Druid in his hallow'd pail,
 Receives the prize ;
 And instant flies,
 Follow'd by th' envenom'd brood,
 'Till he crosses the crystal flood.

SEMICHORUS.

Druid, these, in order meet,
 Are all prepar'd.

SEMICHORUS.

Then all's compleat.
 And now let nine of the selected band,
 Whose greener years besit such station best,
 With wary circuit pace around the grove :
 And guard each inlet ; watchful lest the eye
 Of busy curiosity profane
 Pry on our rites : which now must be as close
 As done i'th' very central womb of earth.
 Occasion claims it ; for Caractacus
 This night demands admission to our train.
 He, once our king, while aught his power avail'd
 To save his country from the rod of tyrants ;
 That duty past, does wisely now retire
 To end his days in secrecy and peace :
 Druid with Druids, in this chief of groves,
 Ev'n in the heart of Mona. See, he comes !
 How awful is his port ! mark him, my friends !
 He looks, as doth the tower, whose nodding walls,
 After the conflict of heav'n's angry bolts,
 Frown with a dignity unmark'd before,
 Ev'n in it's prime of strength. Health to the king !

CARACTACUS, EVILINA, CHORUS.

This holy place, methinks, doth this night wear
 More than it's wonted gloom. Druid these groves
 Have caught the dismal colouring of my soul,
 Changing

Changing their dark dun garbs to very sable,
In pity to their guest. Hail, hallow'd oaks !
Hail, British born ! who, last of British race,
Hold your primæval rights by nature's charter ;
Not at the nod of Cæsar. Happy foresters,
Ye wave your bold heads 'mid the liberal air ;
Nor ask, for privilege, a prætor's edict.
Ye with your tough and interwisted roots,
Grasp the firm rocks ye sprung from ; and, erect
In knotty hardihood, still proudly spread
Your leafy banners 'gainst the tyrannous north,
Who, Roman like, assails you. Tell me, Druid,
Is it not better to be such as these,
Than be the thing I am ?

C H O R U S .

To be the thing,
Eternal wisdom wills, is ever best.

C A R A C T A C U S .

But I am lost to that predestin'd use
Eternal wisdom will'd, and fitly therefore
May wish a change of being. I was born
A king ; and Heav'n, who bade these warrior oaks
Lift their green shields against the fiery sun,
To fence their subject plain, did mean, that I
Should, with as firm an arm, protect my people,
Against the pestilent glare of Rome's ambition.
I fail'd ; and how I fail'd, thou know'st too well ;
So does the babbling world : and therefore, Druid,
I would be any thing save what I am.

C H O R U S .

See, to thy wish, the holy rites prepar'd,
Which, if heav'n frown not, consecrate thee Druid :
See to the altar's base the victims led,
From whose free gushing blood ourself shall read
Its high behests ; which if assenting sound,
These hands around thy chosen limbs shall wrap
The vest of sanctity ; while at the act
Yon white-rob'd bards, sweeping their solemn harps,
Shall lift their choral warblings to the skies,
And call the gods to witness. Mean while, Prince,
Bethink thee well if aught on this vain earth

Still

16 C A R A C T A C U S.

Still holds too firm an union with thy soul;
Estranging it from peace.

C A R A C T A C U S.

I had a queen:
Bear with my weakness, Druid! this tough breast
Must heave a sigh, for she is unreveng'd
And can I taste true peace, she unreveng'd?
So chaste, so lov'd a queen? ah, Evilina!
Hang not thus weeping on the feeble arm
That cou'd not save thy mother.

E V I L I N A.

To hang thus
Softens the pang of grief; and the sweet thought,
That a fond father still supports his child,
Sheds, on my pensive mind, such soothing balm,
As doth the blessing of these pious seers,
When most they wish our welfare. Would to heav'n
A daughter's presence could as much avail,
To ease her father's woes, as his doth mine.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Ever most gentle! come unto my bosom:
Dear pattern of the precious prize I lost,
Lost, so inglorious lost; my friends, these eyes
Did see her torn from my defenceless camp;
Whilst I, hemm'd round by squadrons, could not save her:
My boy, still nearer to the darling pledge,
Beheld her shrieking in the ruffian's arm;
Beheld, and fled.

E V I L I N A.

Ah! Sir, forbear to wound
My brother's fame; he fled, but to recall
His scatter'd forces to pursue and save her.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Daughter, he fled. Now by yon gracious moon,
That rising saw the deed, and instant hid
Her blushing face in twilight's dusky veil,
The flight was parricide.

E V I L I N A.

Indeed, indeed,
I know him valiant; and not doubt he fell
'Mid slaughter'd thousands of the haughty foe,
Victim to filial love. Arviragus,

Thou

Thou hadst no sister near the bloody field,
Whose sorrowing search, led by yon orb of night,
Might find thy body; wash with tears thy wounds;
And wipe them with her hair.

CHORUS.

Peace, virgin, peace:
Nor thou, sad prince, reply; whate'er he is,
Be he a captive, fugitive, or corse,
He is what heav'n ordain'd: these holy groves
Permit no exclamation 'gainst heav'n's will,
To violate their echoes: Patience, here,
Her meek hands folded on her modest breast,
In mute submission lifts th' adoring eye,
Ev'n to the storm that wrecks her.

EVILINA.

Holy Druid,
If aught my erring tongue has said pollutes
This sacred place, I from my soul abjure it,
And will these lips bar with eternal silence,
Rather than speak a word, or act a deed
Unmeet for thy sage daughters, blessing first
This hallow'd hour, that takes me from the world,
And joins me to their sober sisterhood.

CHORUS.

'Tis wisely said. See, prince, this prudent maid,
Now, while the ruddy flame of sparkling youth
Glow on her beauteous cheek, can quit the world
Without a sigh, whilst thou—

CARACTACUS.

Would save my queen
From a base ravisher; would wish to plunge
This falchion in his breast, and so avenge
Insulted royalty. O holy men!
Ye are the sons of piety and peace;
Ye never felt the sharp vindictive frow,
That goads the injur'd warrior; the hot tide,
That flushes crimson on the conscious cheek
Of him, who burns for glory; else indeed
Ye much would pity me: would curse the fate
That coops me here inactive in your groves,
Robs me of hope, tells me this trusty steel
Must never cleave one Roman helm again,

Never

18 C A R A C T A C U S.

Never avenge my queen, nor free my country.

CHORUS.

'Tis heav'n's high will—

CARACTACUS.

I know it, reverend fathers!

'Tis heav'n's high will, that these poor aged eyes

Shall never more behold that virtuous woman,

To whom my youth was constant, 'twas heav'n's will

To take her from me at that very hour,

When best her love might sooth me; that black hour,

[May memory ever raze it from her records]

When all my squadrons fled, and left their king

Old and defenceless: him, who nine whole years

Had stemm'd all Rome with their firm phalanx: yes,

For nine whole years, my friends, I bravely led

The valiant veterans, oft to victory,

Never 'till then to shame. Bear with me, Druid,

I've done: begin the rites.

CHORUS.

O would to heav'n

A frame of mind, more fitted to these rites,

Possess thee, Prince! that Resignation meek,

That dove ey'd Peace, handmaid of Sanctity,

Approach'd this altar with thee: 'stead of these,

See I not gaunt Revenge, ensanguin'd Slaughter,

And mad Ambition, clinging to thy soul,

Eager to snatch thee back to their domain,

Back to a vain and miserable world;

Whose misery, and vanity, tho' try'd,

Thou still hold'st dearer than these solemn shades,

Where Quiet reigns with Virtue? Try we yet

What Holiness can do; for much it can;

Much is the potency of pious prayer:

And much the sacred influence convey'd

By sage mysterious office: when the soul,

Snatch'd by the power of musick from her cell

Of fleshly thralldom, feels herself upborne

On plumes of extasy, and boldly springs,

'Mid swelling harmonies and pealing hymns,

Up to the porch of heav'n. Strike, then, ye Bards!

Strike all your strings symphonious; wake a strain

May penetrate, may purge, may purify,

His

His yet unhallow'd bosom ; call ye hither
The airy tribe, that on yon mountain dwell,
Ev'n on majestic Snowdon : they, who never
Design visit mortal men, save on some cause
Of highest import, but, sublimely shrin'd
On it's hoar top in domes of crystalline ice,
Hold converse with those spirits, that possess
The skies pure sapphire, nearest heav'n itself.

O D E

I. 1.

MONA on Snowdon calls :
Hear, thou King of mountains, hear ;
Hark, she speaks from all her strings ;
Hark, her loudest echo rings ;
King of mountains, bend thine ear :
Send thy spirits, send them soon,
Now, when Midnight and the Moon
Meet upon thy front of snow :
See, their gold and ebon rod,
Where the sober sisters nod,
And greet in whispers sage and slow.
Snowdon mark ! 'tis Magic's hour ;
Now the mutter'd spell hath pow'r ;
Pow'r to rend thy ribs of rock,
And burst thy base with thunder's shock ;
But to thee no ruder spell
Shall Mona use, than those that dwell
In music's secret cells, and lie
Steep'd in the stream of harmony.

I. 2.

Snowdon has heard the strain :
Hark, amid the wond'ring grove
Other harpings answer clear,
Other voices meet our ear,
Pinions flutter, shadows move,
Busy murmurs hum around,
Rustling vestments brush the ground ;
Round, and round, and round they go,
Thro' the twilight, thro' the shade,
Mount the oak's majestic head,
And gild the tufted misseltoe.

Cease,

Cease, ye glittering race of light,
 Close your wings, and check your flight:
 Here, arrang'd in order due,
 Spread your robes of saffron hue;
 For lo, with more than mortal fire,
 Mighty Mador smites the lyre:
 Hark, he sweeps the master strings;
 Listen all —

CHORUS.

Break off; a sullen smock involves the altar;
 The central oak doth shake; I hear the sound
 Of steps profane: Caractacus, retire;
 Bear off the victims; Mona is polluted.

SEMICHORUS.

Father, as we did watch the eastern side,
 We spied and instant seiz'd two stranger youths,
 Who, in the bottom of a shadowy dell,
 Held earnest converse: Britons do they seem,
 And of Brigantian race.

CHORUS.

Haste, drag them hither.

VELLINUS, ELIDURUS, CHORUS.

O spare, ye sage and venerable Druids!
 Your countrymen and sons.

CHORUS.

And are ye Britons?
 Unheard of profanation! Rome herself,
 Ev'n impious Rome, whom conquest makes more impious,
 Would not have dar'd so rashly. O! for words,
 Big with the fiercest force of execration,
 To blast the deed, and doers.

ELIDURUS.

Spare the curse,
 Oh spare our youth!

CHORUS.

Is it not now the hour,
 The holy hour, when to the cloudless height
 Of yon starr'd concave climbs the full-orb'd moon,
 And to this nether world in solemn stillness
 Gives sign, that to the list'ning ear of Heav'n
 Religion's voice should plead; the very babe
 Knows this, and, chance awak'd, his little hands

Lifts

C A R A C T A C U S. 21

Lifts to the gods; and on his innocent couch
Calls down a blessing. Shall your many years
Plead ignorance; and impiously presume
To press, with vile unconsecrated feet,
On Mona's hallow'd plain? Know, wretches, know,
At any hour such boldness is a crime,
At this 'tis sacrilege.

VELLINUS.

Were Mona's plain
More hallow'd still, hallow'd as it Heav'n we self,
The cause might plead our pardon.

ELIDURUS.

Mighty Druid!
True, we have rashly dar'd, yet forc'd by duty,
Our sov'reign's mandate.

VELLINUS.

Elder by my birth,
Brother, I claim, in right of eldership,
To open our high embassy.

CHORUS.

Speak then,
But see thy words answer in honest weight;
To this proud prelude. Youth! they must be weighty
T'atone for such a crime.

VELLINUS.

If then to give
New nerves to vanquish'd valour, if to do,
What, with the blessing of the Gods, may save
A bleeding country from oppression's sword,
Be weighty business, know, on our commission,
And on it's hop'd success, that weight depends.

CHORUS.

Declare it then at once, briefly and boldly,
Caractacus is here.

CHORUS.

Say'st thou, proud boy?
'Tis boldly said, and, grant 'twere truly said,
Think'st thou he were not here from fraud or force
As safe as 'midst a camp of conquerors
Here, youth, he would be guarded by the gods,
Their own high hostage; and each sacred hair

Of his selected head, would in these caverns
Sleep with the unsunn'd silver of the mine,
As precious and as safe; record the time,
When Mona e'er betray'd the hapless wretch,
That made her groves his refuge.

VELLINUS.

Holy Druid!

Think not so harshly of our enterprize.

Can force, alas! dwell in our unarm'd hands?

Can fraud in our young bosoms? No, dread fears,

Our business told, I trust thou'lt soon disclaim

The vain suspicion; and thy holy ear

(Be brave Caractacus or here or absent)

Shall instant learn it. From the north we come,

The sons of her, whose heav'n intrusted sway

Blesses the bold Brigantes; men, who firmly

Have three long moons withstood those Roman powers;

Which, led by fell Ostorius, still assail

Our frontiers: yet so oft have our stout swords

Repell'd their hot assault, that now, like falcons,

They hang suspended, loth to quit their prey,

Nor daring yet to seize it. Such the state

Of us and Rome; 'mid which our prudent mother,

Revolving what might to her people's weal

Best sink the dubious scale, gave us swift charge

To seek the great Caractacus, and call

His valour to her aid, to lead her bands,

To fight the cause of liberty and Britain,

And quell these ravages.

Caractacus starts from behind the altar.

CARACTACUS, VELLINUS, ELIDURUS,

CHORUS.

And ye have found me;

Friends, ye have found me: lead me to your Queen,

And the last purple drop in these old veins

Shall fall for her and Britain.

CHORUS.

Rash, rash Prince!

VELLINUS.

Ye blest immortal powers! is this the man,

The more than man, who for nine bloody years

Withstood all Rome? He is; that war-like front,

Scam'd

Seam'd o'er with honest scars, proclaims he is:
Kneel, brother, kneel, while in his royal hand
We lodge the signet on this, in pledge of faith;
Great Cartimandua sends, and with it tells thee
She has a nobler pledge than this behind;
Thy Queen—

C A R A C T A C U S.

Guideria!—
V E L L I N U S.

Safely with our mother,
C A R A C T A C U S.
How, when, where rescued? mighty Gods, I thank ye,
For it is true, this signet speaks it true,
O tell me briefly.

V E L L I N U S.

In a sally, Prince,
Which, wanting abler chiefs, my gracious mother
Committed to my charge, our troops assail'd
One outpost of the camp; the mask of night
Favour'd our arms, and there my happy hand
Was doom'd to bid other prisoners to release
The captive maion.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Let me clasp thee, youth,
And thou shalt be my son; I had one stranger,
Just of thy years; he look'd like thee right honest;
Had just that freeborn boldness on his brow,
And yet he fail'd me. Were it not for him,
Who, as thou seest, ev'n at this hour of joy,
Draws tears down mine old cheek, I were as blest
As the great gods. Oh, he has all disgrac'd
His high-born ancestry! But I'll forget him.
Haste, Evilina, barb my knotty spear;
Bind fast this trusty falchion to my thigh;
My bow, my target—

C H O R U S.

Rash Caractacus!
What hast thou done? What dost thou mean to do?

C A R A C T A C U S.

To save my country.

C H O R U S.

CHORUS.

To betray thyself; that thou hast done;
 That thou hast done; the rest thou canst not do;
 If Heav'n forbids; and of it's awful will
 Thy fury reck; not; Has the bleeding victim
 Pour'd a propitious stream? the milk-white steeds
 Unrein'd and neighing pranc'd with sav'ring steps?
 Say, when these youths approach'd, did not a gust
 Of livid smook involve the thickening flame?
 Did not the forest tremble? every omen
 Led thee to doubt their honesty of purpose;
 And yet, before their tongues could tell that purpose,
 Ere I had tender'd, as our laws ordain,
 Their test of faith, thy rudeness rush'd before me,
 Infringing my just rights.

CARACTACUS.

Druid, methinks, in such a cause, Reproof
 At such a time, in such a cause, Reproof
 Might but its strength; Now, by Heav'n, I feel
 Beyond all others, that within my breast,
 That marshals me to conquest, something here
 That snatches me beyond all mortal fears,
 Lifts me to where upon her jasper throne
 Sits flame-rob'd Victory, who calls me son,
 And crowns me with a palm, whose deathless green
 Shall bloom when Caesar's fides

CHORUS.

Vain confidence!

CARACTACUS.

Yet I submit to all—

CHORUS.

'Tis meet thou should'st;
 Thou art a King; a sov'reign o'er frail man;
 I am a Druid, servant of the Gods;
 Such service is above such sovereignty;
 As well thou know'st: if they should prompt these lips
 To interdict the thing thou dar'st to do,
 What would avail thy daring?

CARACTACUS.

Holy man!
 But thou wilt bless it; Heav'n will bid thee bless it;
 Thou know'st that, when we fight to save our country.

We

We fight the cause of Heav'n. The man that falls,
Falls hallow'd; falls a Victim for the Gods;
For them and for their altars.

CHORUS.

Valiant Prince!

Think not we lightly rate our country's weal,
Or thee our country's champion. Well we know
The glorious meed of those exalted souls,
Who flame like thee for freedom: mark me, Prince,
The time will come, when Destiny and Death,
Thron'd in a burning car, the thundering wheels
Arm'd with gigantic scythes of adamant,
Shall scour this field of life, and in their rear
The fiend Oblivion: kingdoms, empires, worlds,
Melt in the general blaze: when, lo, from high
Andraсте darting, catches from the wreck
The roll of fame, claps her ascending plumes,
And stamps on orient stars each patriot name,
Round her eternal dome.

C A R A C T A C U S .

Speak ever thus,
And I will hear thee, 'till attention faint
In heedless extasy.

CHORUS.

This tho' we know,
Let man beware with headlong zeal to rush
Where slaughter calls: it is not courage, Prince,
No nor the pride and practis'd skill in arms,
That gains this meed: the warrior is no patriot,
Save when, obsequious to the will of Heav'n,
He draws the sword of vengeance.

C A R A C T A C U S .

Surely, Druid,
Such fair occasion speaks the will of Heav'n—

CHORUS.

Monarch, perchance thou hast a fair occasion:
But, if thou hast, the Gods will soon declare it:
Their sov'reign will thou know'st not; this to learn
Demands our search. Ye mortals all retire!
Leave ye the grove to us and Inspiration;
Nor let a step, or ev'n one glance profane,

Steal from your caverns : stay, my holy brethren,
 Ye time-ennobled Seers, whose rev'rend brows
 Full eighty winters whiten ! you, ye Bards,
 Leoline, Cadwall, Hoel, Cantabar,
 Attend upon our slumbers : Wondrous men,
 Ye, whose skill'd fingers know best how to lead,
 Thro' all the maze of sound the wayward step
 Of Harmony, recalling oft, and oft
 Permitting her unbridled course to rush
 Thro' dissonance to concord, sweetest then
 Ev'n when expected harshness. Mador, thou
 Alone shalt lift thy voice ; no choral peal
 Shall drown thy solemn warbling ; thou best know'st
 That opiate charm which lulls corporeal sense :
 Thou hast the key, great Bard ! that best can open
 The portal of the soul ; unlock it straight,
 And lead the pensive pilgrim on her way,
 Thro' the vast regions of futurity.

[*Exeunt Caractacus, Vellinus,*
&c. &c.]

O D E.

I. 1.

HAIL, thou harp of Phrygian frame !
 In years of yore that Camber bore
 From Troy's sepulchral flame ;
 With ancient Brute to Britain's shore
 The mighty minstrel came :
 Sublime upon the burnish'd prow,
 He bade thy manly modes to flow ;
 Britain heard the descant bold,
 She flung her white arms o'er the sea ;
 Proud in her leafy bosom to unfold
 The freight of harmony.

1. 2.

Mute 'till then was ev'ry plain,
 Save where the flood 'mid mountains rude
 Tumbled his tide amain ;
 And echo from th' impending wood
 Resounded the hoarse strain ;

While

While from the north the sullen gale
With hollow whistlings shook the vale;
Dismal notes, and answer'd soon
By savage howl the heaths among,
What time the wolf doth bay the trembling moon,
And thin the bleating throng,

1. 3.

Thou spak'st, imperial Lyre,
The rough roar ceas'd, and airs from high
Lapt the land in extasy:
Fancy, the fairy, with thee came;
And Inspiration, bright ey'd dame,
Oft at thy call would leave her sapphire sky;

And, if not vain the verse presumes,
Ev'n now some chaste Divinity is near:
For lo! the sound of distant plumes
Pants thro' the pathless desert of the air.
'Tis not the flight of her;
'Tis Sleep, her dewy harbinger.

Change, my harp, O change thy measures:
Cull, from thy mellifluous treasures,
Notes that steal on even feet,
Ever slow, yet never pausing,
Mixt with many a warble sweet,
In a ling'ring cadence closing,
While the pleas'd power sinks gently down the skies,
And seals with hand of down the Druids slumbering eyes.

2.

Thrice I pause, and thrice I sound
The central string, and now bring
(By measur'd lore profound)
A sevenfold chime, and sweep, and swing
Above, below, around,
To mix thy music with the spheres,

That warble to immortal ears:
Inspiration hears the call,
She rises from her throne above,
And, sudden as the glancing meteors fall,
She comes, she fills the grove.

B 2

2. 2.

High her port; her waving hand
 A pencil bears; the days, the years,
 Arise at her command,
 And each obedient colouring wears.
 So, where Time's pictur'd band
 In hues ætherial glide along;
 O mark the transitory throng;
 Now they dazzle, now they die,
 Instant they flit from light to shade,
 Mark the blue forms of faint futurity,
 O mark them ere they fade.

2. 3.

Whence was that inward groan?
 Why bursts thro' closed lids the tear?
 Why uplifts the bristling hair
 Its white and venerable shade,
 Why down the consecrated head
 Courses in chilly drops the dews of fear?
 All is not well, the pale-ey'd moon
 Curtains her head in clouds, the stars retire,
 Save from the sultry south alone
 The swart star sings his pestilential fire;
 Ev'n Sleep herself will fly,
 If not recall'd by harmony.
 Wake, my lyre! thy softest numbers,
 Such as nurse ecstatic slumbers,
 Sweet as tranquil virtue feels
 When the toil of life is ending,
 While from earth the spirit steals,
 And, on new-born plumes ascending,
 Hastens to lave in the bright fount of day;
 'Till Destiny prepare a shrine of purer clay.

The Druid waking speaks.

CHORUS:

It may not be. Avaunt, terrific ax!
 Why hangs thy bright edge glaring o'er the grove?
 O for a giant's nerve to ward the stroke!
 It bows, it falls.
 Where am I? hush, my soul!
 'Twas all a dream. Resume no more the strain:
 The hour is past: my brethren! what ye saw,

Alf what ye ſaw, as by your looks I read,
Bore like ill-omen'd ſhape) hold it in ſilence.
The midnight air falls chilly on my breaſt;
And now I ſhiver, now a ſev'riſh glow
Scorches my vitals. Hark, ſome ſtep approaches.

EVILINA, CHORUS.

Thus, with my wayward fears, to buſt unbidden
On your dread ſynod, rouſing, as ye ſeem,
From holy trance, appears a deſperate deed,
Ev'n to the wretch who dares it.

CHORUS.

Virgin! quickly
Pronounce the cauſe.

EVILINA.

Bear with a ſimple maid
Too prone to fear, perchance my fears are vain.

CHORUS.

But yet declare them.

EVILINA.

I ſuſpect me much
The faith of theſe Brigantes.

CHORUS.

Say'ſt thou, Virgin?
Heed what thou ſay'ſt; Suſpicion is a gueſt
That in the breaſt of man, of ireful man,
Too oft' his welcome finds; yet ſeldom ſure
In that ſubmiſſive calm that ſmooths the mind
Of maiden innocent.

EVILINA.

I know it well:
Yet muſt I ſtill diſtruſt the elder ſtranger:
For while he talks, (and much the flatterer talks)
His brother's ſilent carriage gives diſproof
Of all his boaſt; indeed I mark'd it well;
And, as my father with the elder held
Bold ſpeech and warlike, as is ſtill his wont
When fir'd with hope of conqueſt, oft I ſaw
A ſigh unbidden heave the younger's breaſt,
Half check'd as it was rais'd; ſometimes, methought;
His gentle eye would caſt a glance on me,
As if he pitied me; and then again

Would fasten on my father, gazing there
To veneration; then he'd sigh again,
Look on the ground, and hang his modest head
Most pensively.

CHORUS.

This may demand, my brethren,
More serious search: Virgin! proceed.

EVILINA.

'Tis true,
My father, rapt in high heroic zeal,
His ev'ry thought big with his country's freedom,
Heeds not the different carriage of these brethren,
The elder takes him wholly; yet, methinks,
The younger's manners have I know not what,
That speaks him far more artless. This besides,
Is it not strange, if, as the tale reports,
My mother sojourns with this distant queen,
She should not send or to my sire, or me,
Some fond remembrance of her love? ah! none,
With tears I speak it, none, not her dear blessing
Has reach'd my longing ears.

CHORUS.

The gods, my brethren,
Have wak'd these doubts in the unfainted breast
Of this mild maiden; oft to female softness,
Oft to the purity of virgin souls
Doth heav'n it's voluntary light dispense,
When victims bleed in vain. They must be spies.
Hie thee, good Cantaber, and to our presence
Summon the young Brigantian.

EVILINA.

Do not that,
Or, if ye do, yet treat him nothing sternly:
The softest terms from such a tender breast
Will draw confession, and, if ye shall find
The treason ye suspect, forbear to curse him.
(Not that my weakness means to guide your wisdom)
Yet, as I think he would not wittingly
E'er do a deed of baseness, were it granted
That I might question him, my heart forebodes
It more could gain by gentleness and prayers,
Than will the fiercest threats.

CHORUS

CHORUS.

Perchance it may:
And quickly shalt thou try. But see the King!
And with him both the youths.

EVILINA.

Alas! my fears
Forewent my errand, else had I inform'd thee
That therefore did I come, and from my father
To gain admission. Mark the younger, Druid,
How sad he seems; oft did he in the cave
So fold his arms—

CHORUS.

We mark him much, and much
The elder's free and dreadful confidence.
Virgin, retire a while in yonder vale,
Nor, 'till thy royal father quits the grove,
Resume thy station here. *[Exit Evilina.]*

CARACTACUS, CHORUS, VELLINUS, ELI-
DURUS.

Forgive me, Druid!
My eager soul no longer could sustain
The pangs of expectation; hence I sent
The virgin innocence of Evilina.
Safest to break upon your privacy;
She not return'd, O pardon! that uncall'd
I follow: the great cause, I trust, absolves me:
'Tis your's, 'tis freedom's, 'tis the cause of heav'n;
And sure heav'n owns it such.

CHORUS.

Caractacus,
All that by sage and sanctimonious rites
Might of the gods be ask'd, we have essay'd,
And yet, nor to our wish, nor to their wont,
Gave they benign assent.

CARACTACUS.

Death to our hopes!

CHORUS.

While yet we lay in sacred slumber trac'd,
Sullen and sad to fancy's frighted eye
Did shapes of dun and murky hue advance,
In train tumultuous, all of gesture strange,

And passing horrible ; starting we wak'd,
Yet felt no waking calm ; still all was dark,
Still rang our tinkling ears with screams of woe.
Suspicious tremors still—

VELLINUS.

Of what suspicious ?
Druid, our Queen—

CHORUS.

Restrain thy way-ward tongue,
Insolent youth ! in such licentious mood
To interrupt our speech ill suits thy years,
And worse our sanctity.

CARACTACUS.

'Tis his distress
Makes him forget, what else his reverend zeal
Would pay ye holily. Think what he feels,
Poor youth ! who fears yon moon, before she wanes,
May see his country conquer'd ; see his mother
The victor's slave, her royal blood debas'd,
Dragging her chains thro' the throng'd streets of Rome,
To grace oppression's triumph. Horrid thought !
Say, can it be that he, whose strenuous youth
Adds vigour to his virtue, e'er can bear
This patiently ? he comes to ask my aid,
And, that with-held, (as now he needs must fear)
What means, alas ! are left ? search Britain round,
What chief dares cope with Rome ? what king but holds
His loan of power at a Proconsul's will,
At best a scepter'd slave ?

VELLINUS.

Yes, Monarch, yes,
If Heav'n restrains thy formidable sword,
Or to it's stroke denies that just success
Which Heaven alone can give, I fear me much
Our Queen, ourselves, nay, Britain's self must perish.

CARACTACUS.

But is not this a fear makes Virtue vain ?
Tears from yon ministering regents of the sky
Their right ? Plucks from firm-handed Providence,
The golden reins of sublunary sway,
And gives them to blind Chance ? If this be so,
If Tyranny must lord it o'er the earth,
There's

There's Anarchy in Heav'n. Nay, frown not, Druid,
I do not think 'tis thus.

CHORUS.

We trust thou dost not.

CARACTACUS.

Masters of Wisdom! No: my soul confides
In that all-healing and all-forming Power,
Who, on the radiant day when Time was born,
Cast his broad eye upon the wild of ocean,
And calm'd it with a glance: then, plunging deep,
His mighty arm, pluck'd from it's dark domain
This throne of Freedom, lifted it to light,
Girt it with silver cliffs, and call'd it Britain:
He did, and will preserve it.

CHORUS.

Pious Prince,
In that all-healing and all-forming power
Still let thy soul confide; but not in men;
No not in these, ingenuous as they seem,
'Till they are try'd by that high test of faith
Our ancient laws ordain.

VELLINUS.

Illustrious Seer;
Methinks our Sov'reign's signet well might plead
Her envoy's faith. Thy pardon, mighty Druid;
Not for ourselves, but for our Queen we plead;
Mistrusting us, ye wound her honour.

CHORUS.

Peace;
Our will admits no parly. Thither, Youths;
Turn your astonish'd eyes; behold yon huge
And unhewn sphere of living adamant,
Which, pois'd by magic, reits it's central weight
On yonder pointed rock: firm as it seems,
Such is it's strange and virtuous property,
It moves obsequious to the gentlest touch
Of him, whose breast is pure; but to a traitor;
Tho' ev'n a giant's prowess nerv'd his arm,
It stands as fixt as Snowdon. No reply;
The Gods command that one of you must now
Approach and try it: in your snowy vests,
Ye Priests, involve the lots, and to the younger,

As is our wont, tender the choice of Fate.

ELIDURUS.

Heav'n's! is it fall'n on me?

CHORUS.

Young Prince, it is;

Prepare thee for thy tryal.

ELIDURUS.

Gracious Gods!

Who may look up to your tremendous thrones,

And say his breast is pure? All-searching Powers,

Ye know already how and what I am;

And what ye mean to publish me in Mona,

To that I yield and tremble.

CARACTACUS.

Rouse thee, Youth!

And, with that courage honest Truth supplies,

(For sure ye both are true) haste to the tryal;

Behold I lead thee on.

CHORUS.

Prince, we arrest

Thy hasty step; to witness this high test

Pertains to us alone. Awhile retire,

And in yon cave his brother be thy charge;

The tryal past, again will we confer,

Touching that part which Heav'n's deciding choice

Wills thee to act.

Exeunt Caractacus and Vellinus.

CHORUS, ELIDURUS.

Now be the rites prepar'd;

And now, ye Bards, chaunt ye that custom'd hymn,

The prelude of this fam'd solemnity.

O D E.

I. I.

THOU Spirit pure, that spread'st unseen

Thy pinions o'er this pond'rous sphere,

And breathing thro' each rigid vein,

Fill'st with stupendous life the marble mass,

And bid'st it bow upon it's base,

When sov'reign Truth is near;

Spirit invisible! to thee

We swell the solemn harmony;

Hear

Hear us, and aid:

Thou, that in Virtue's cause
O'er-rulest Nature's laws,
O hear, and aid with influence high
The sons of Peace and Piety

First-born of that æthereal tribe
Call'd into birth ere time or place,
Whom wave nor wind can circumscribe,
Heirs of the liquid liberty of Light,
That float on rainbow pennons bright
Thro' all the wilds of space,
Yet thou alone of all thy kind
Canst range the regions of the mind,
Thou only know'st
That dark meandering maze,
Where wayward Falshood strays,
And seizing swift the lurking sprites,
Forces her forth to shame and light.

Thou can'st enter the dark cell
Where the vulture Conscience slumbers,
And, unarm'd by charming spell,
Or magic numbers,
Can'st rouse her from her formidable sleep,
And bid her dart her raging talons deep;
Yet, ah! too seldom doth the furious fiend
Thy bidding wait; vindictive, self-prepared,
She knows her tort'ring time; too sure to rend
The trembling heart, when Virtue quits her guard.
Pause then, celestial guest!
And brooding on thine adamant sphere,
If fraud approach, Spirit that fraud declare;
To Conscience and to Mona leave the rest.

CHORUS.

Heard'st thou the awful invocation, Youth,
Wrapt in those holy harpings?

ELIDURUS.

Sage, I did;
And it came o'er my soul as doth the thunder,
While distant yet, it, with expectant burst
Threatens the trembling ear. Now to the tryal.

CHORUS.

CHORUS.

Ere that, bethink thee well what sig'ours doom
Threatens thine aft, if failing, certain death :
So certain, that in our absorbing tongues
Rests not that power may save thee : Thou must die.

EVILINA, ELIDURUS, CHORUS.

Die, say'st thou? Druid!

ELIDURUS.

Evilina here!

Lead to the rock.

CHORUS.

No, youth, a while we spare thee ;
And, in our stead, permit this royal maiden
To urge thee first with virgin gentleness ;
Respect our clemency, and meet her questions
With answers prompt and true ; so may'st thou 'scape
A sterner tryal.

ELIDURUS.

Rather to the rock —

EVILINA.

Dost thou disdain me, Prince? Loft as I am,
Methinks the daughter of Caradocus
Might merit milder treatment: I was born
To royal hopes and promise, nurs'd i'th lap
Of soft prosperity, alas the change!
I meant but to address a few brief words
To this young Prince, and he doth turn his eye,
And scorns to answer me.

ELIDURUS.

Scorn thee, sweet Maid?

No, 'tis the fear —

EVILINA.

And canst thou fear me, Youth?
Ev'n while I led a life of royalty,
I bore myself to all with meek deportment,
In nothing harsh, or cruel: and, how'er
Misfortune works upon the minds of men,
(For some they say it turns to very stone)
Mine I am sure it softens. Wert thou guilty,
Yet I should pity thee; nay, wert thou leagu'd
To load this suffering heart with more misfortunes,

Still

Still should I pity thee; nor e'er believe
Thou would'st, on free and voluntary choice,
Betray the innocent.

ELIDURUS.

Indeed I would not.

EVILINA.

No, gracious Youth, I do believe thou would'st not:
For on thy brow the liberal hand of Heav'n
Hath portray'd Truth as visible and bold,
As were the pictur'd suns that deckt the brows
Of our brave ancestors. Say then, young Prince,
(For therefore have I wish'd to question thee)
Bring ye no token of a mother's fondness
To her expecting child? Gentle thou seemest,
And sure that gentleness would prompt thine heart
To visit, and to sooth with courteous office,
Distress like her's. A captive and a queen
Has more than common claim for pity, Prince,
And, ev'n the ills of venerable age
Were cause enough to move thy tender nature.
The tears o'er-charge thine eye. Alas, my fears!
Sickness or sore infirmity had seiz'd her,
Before thou left'st the palace, else her lips
Had to thy care intrusted some kind message,
And blest her hapless daughter by thy tongue:
Would she were here!

ELIDURUS.

Would Heav'n she were!

EVILINA.

Ah why?

ELIDURUS.

Because you wish it.

EVILINA.

Thanks, ingenuous youth,
For this thy courtesy. Yet if the queen
Thy mother shines with such rare qualities,
As late thy brother boasted, she will calm
Her woes, and I shall clasp her aged knees
Again, in peace and liberty. — Alas!
He speaks not; all my fears are just.

ELIDURUS.

ELIDURUS.

What fears?
The Queen Guideria is not dead.

EVILINA.

Not dead!

But is she in that sacred state of freedom,
Which we were taught to hope? Why sigh'st thou,
Youth?

Thy years have yet been prosperous. Did thy father
E'er lose his kingdom? Did captivity
E'er seize thy shrieking mother? thou canst go
To yonder cave, and find thy brother safe;
He is not lost, as mine is. Youth, thou sigh'st
Again; thou hast not sure such cause for sorrow;
But if thou hast, give me thy griefs, I pray thee;
I have a heart can softly sympathize,
And sympathy is soothing.

ELIDURUS.

O gods! gods!

She tears my soul. What shall I say?

EVILINA.

Perchance.

For all in this bad world must have their woes,
Thou too hast thine; and may'st, like me, be wretched.
Haply amid the ruinous waste of war,
'Mid that wild havock, which these sons of blood
Bring on our groaning country, some chaste maid,
Whose tender soul was link'd by love to thine,
Might fall the trembling prey to Roman rage,
Ev'n at the golden hour, when holy rites
Had seal'd your virtuous vows. If it were so,
Indeed I pity her!

ELIDURUS.

Not that: not that.

Never 'till now did beauty's matchless beam——

But I am dumb.

EVILINA.

Why that dejected eye?

And why this silence? that some weighty grief
O'erhangs thy soul, thy ev'ry look proclaims.
Why then refuse it words? The heart, that bleeds
From any stroke of fate or human wrongs,

Loves

Loves to disclose itself, that list'ning pity
May drop a healing tear upon the wound.
'Tis only, when with inbred horror smote
At some base act, or done, or to be done,
That the recoiling soul, with conscious dread,
Shrinks back into itself. But thou, good youth—

ELIDURUS.

Cease, royal maid! permit me to depart:—

EVILINA.

Yet hear me, stranger! Truth and Secrecy,
Tho' friends, are seldom necessary friends—

ELIDURUS.

I go to try my truth—

EVILINA.

O! go not hence,
In wrath; think not, that I suspect thy virtue:
Yet ignorance may oft make virtue slide,
And if—

ELIDURUS.

In pity spare me.

EVILINA.

If thy brother—
Nay, start not, do not turn thine eye from mine;
Speak, I conjure thee, is his purpose honest?
I know the guilty price that barbarous Rome
Sets on my father's head; and gold, vile gold,
Has now a charm for Britons: Brib'd by this,
Should he betray him—Yes, I see thou shudder'st
At the dire thought; yet not, as if 'twere strange;
But as our fears were mutual. Ah, young stranger;
That open face scarce needs a tongue to utter
What works within. Come then, ingenuous Prince,
And instant make discovery to the Druid,
While yet 'tis not too late.

ELIDURUS.

Ah! what discovery?
Say, whom must I betray?

EVILINA.

Thy brother.

ELIDURUS.

Ha!

EVILINA.

EVILINA.

Who is no brother, if his guilty soul
 Seems with such perfidy. O all ye stars!
 Can he be brother to a youth like thee;
 Who would betray an old and honour'd King,
 That King his countryman, and one whose prowess
 Once guarded Britain 'gainst th' assailing world?
 Can he be brother to a youth like thee,
 Who from a young, defenceless, innocent maid,
 Would take that King her father? make her suffer
 All that an orphan suffers? more perchance:
 The Russian foe.—O tears, ye choke my utterance!
 Can he be brother to a youth like thee,
 Who would defile his soul try such black deeds?
 It cannot be—And yet, thou still art silent.
 Turn, youth, and see me weep. Ah, see me kneel:
 I am of royal blood, not wont to kneel,
 Yet will I kneel to thee. O save my father!
 Save a distressed maiden from the force
 Of barbarous men! Be thou a brother to me,
 For mine alas! hah! {*Sees Arviragus entering.*}

ARVIRAGUS, EVILINA, ELIDURUS, CHORUS.

Evilina, rise!

Know, maid, I ne'er will tamely see thee kneel,
 Ev'n at the foot of Caesar.

EVILINA.

'Tis himself:

And he will prove my father's fears were false,
 False, as his son is brave. Thou best of brothers,
 Come to my arms. Where hast thou been, thou wan-
 derer?

How wert thou sav'd? indeed, Arviragus,
 I never shed such tears, since thou wert lost;
 For these are tears of rapture.

ARVIRAGUS.

Evilina!

Fain would I greet thee as a brother ought!
 But wherefore did'st thou kneel?

EVILINA.

O! ask not now.

ARVIRAGUS.

ARVIRAGUS.

By heav'n I must, and he must answer me,
Whoe'er he be. What art thou, fullen stranger?

ELIDURUS.

A Briton.

ARVIRAGUS.

Brief and bold.

EVILINA.

Ah, spare the taunt:

He merits not thy wrath. Behold the Druids;

Lo, they advance: with holy reverence first

Thou must address their sanctity.

ARVIRAGUS.

I will.

But see, proud Boy, thou dost not quit the grove,

Till Time allows us parley.

ELIDURUS.

Prince, I mean not.

ARVIRAGUS.

Sages, and Sons of Heav'n! Illustrious Druids!

Abruptly I approach your sacred Presence:

Yet such dire tidings

CHORUS.

On thy peril peace!

Thou standst accus'd, and by a Father's voice,

Of crimes abhorr'd, of Cowardice and Flight:

And therefore may'st not in these sacred groves

Utter polluted accents. Quickly say,

Wherefore thou fled'st? For that base fact unlearn'd

We hold no further converse.

ARVIRAGUS.

O ye Gods!

Am I the Son of your Caractacus?

And could I fly?

CHORUS.

Waste not or Time or Words:

But tell us, why thou fled'st?

ARVIRAGUS.

I fled not, Druid!

By the great Gods I fled not! Save to stop

Our dastard troops that basely turn'd their backs.

I stop'd, I rallied them, when lo a shaft

Of random cast did level me with earth,
 Where pale and senseless as the slain around me,
 I lay till midnight: Then, as from long trance
 Awoke, I crawl'd upon my feeble Limbs
 To a lone cottage, where a pitying Hind
 Lodg'd me and nourish'd me. My strength repair'd,
 It boots not that I tell, what humble arts
 Compell'd I us'd to screen me from the foe.
 How now a peasant from a beggarly scrip
 I sold cheap food to slaves, that nam'd the price,
 Nor after gave it. Now a Minstrel poor
 With ill-tun'd harp and uncouth descant thrill
 I ply'd a thriftless trade, and by such shifts
 Did win Obscurity to shroud my name.
 At length to other conquests in the north
 Ostorius led his legions: Safer now,
 Yet not secure, I to some valiant Chiefs,
 Whom War had spar'd, discover'd, what I was;
 And with them plan'd how surest we might draw
 Our scatter'd forces to some rocky fastness
 In rough Caernarvon, there to breathe in freedom,
 If not with brave incursion to oppress
 The thinly-station'd foe. And soon our art
 So well avail'd, that now at Snowdon's foot
 Full twenty troops of hardy veterans wait
 To call my Sire their leader.

CHORUS.

Valiant youth

EVILINA.

He is — I said, he was a valiant Youth,
 Nor has he sham'd his race.

CHORUS.

We do believe

Thy modest tale: And may the righteous Gods,
 Thus ever shed upon thy noble breast
 Discretion's cooling dew. When nurtur'd so,
 Then, only then, doth Valour bloom mature.

ARVIRAGUS.

Yet vain is Valour howsoe'er it bloom:
 Druid, the Gods frown on us. All my hopes
 Are blasted; I shall ne'er rejoin my Friends

Ne'er

Ne'er blest them with my Father. Holy Men,
I have a tale to tell, will shake your Souls.
Your Mona is invaded, Rome approaches,
E'en to these Groves approaches.

SEMICHORUS.

Horror ! Horror !

ARVIRAGUS.

Late, as I landed on yon highest beach,
Where nodding from the rocks the Poplars fling
Their scatter'd arms, and dash them in the wave,
There were their Vessels moor'd, as if they sought
Concealment 'mid the shade, and as I pass
Up yon thick-planted ridge, I spy'd their helms
'Mid brakes and boughs trench'd in the heath below
Where like a nest of night-worms did they glitter,
Sprinkling the plain with brightness. On I sped
With silent step, yet oft did pass so near,
'Twas next to prodigy, I 'scap'd unseen.

CHORUS.

Their number, Prince ?

ARVIRAGUS.

Few, if mine hasty Eye
Did find, and count them all.

CHORUS.

O Brethren, Brethren,
Treason and sacrilege, worse foes than Rome,
Have led Rome hither. Instant seize that wretch,
And bring him to our presence.

CHORUS, ELIDURUS, ARVIRAGUS.

Say thou, false one !

What doom befits the slave, who sells his country ?

ELIDURUS.

Death, sudden death !

CHORUS.

No ling'ring piece-meal death ;
And to such death thy brother and thyself
We now devote. Villain, thy deeds are known,
'Tis known, ye led the impious Romans hither
To slaughter us ev'n on our holy Altars.

ELIDURUS.

That on my soul doth lie some secret grief,

These

These looks perforce will tell : It is not fear,
 Druids, it is not fear, that shakes me thus ;
 The great Gods know it is not : Ye can never :
 For, what tho' Wisdom lifts ye next those Gods,
 Ye cannot, like to them, unlock Mens breasts,
 And read their inmost thoughts. Ah ! that ye could.

ARVIRAGUS.

What hast thou done ?

ELIDURUS.

What, Prince, I will not tell.

CHORUS.

Wretch, there are means—

ELIDURUS.

I know, and terrible means ;
 And 'tis both fit, that you should try those means,
 And I endure them : Yet I think, my patience
 Will for some space baffle your torturing fury.

CHORUS.

Be that best known, when our inflicted goods—
 Harrow thy flesh !

ARVIRAGUS.

Stranger, ere this is try'd,
 Confess the whole of thy black perfidy :
 So black, that when I look upon thy youth,
 Read thy mild eye, and mark thy modest brow,
 I think indeed, thou durst not.

ELIDURUS.

Such a crime

Indeed, I durst not ; and would rather be
 The very wretch, thou seest. I'll speak no more.

CHORUS.

Brethren 'tis so. The Virgin's thoughts were just :
 This Youth has been deceiv'd.

ELIDURUS.

Yes, one Word more.

You say, the Romans have invaded Mona.
 Give me a sword and twenty honest Britons,
 And I will quell those Romans. Vain demand !
 Alas ! you cannot : Ye are Men of Peace :
 Religion's self forbids. Lead then to torture.

ARVIRAGUS.

Now on my Soul this Youth doth move me much.

CHORUS.

CHORUS.

Think not, Religion and our holy Office
 Doth teach us tamely, like the bleating Lamb,
 To crouch before Oppression, and with neck
 Outstretch'd await the stroke. Mistaken Boy!
 Did not strict Justice claim thee for her Victim,
 We might full safely send thee to these Romans,
 Inviting their hot charge. Know, when I blow
 That sacred Trumpet bound with sable fillers
 To yonder branching Oak, the awful sound
 Calls forth a thousand Britons train'd alike
 In holy and in martial exercise,
 Not by such mode and rule, as Romans use,
 But of that fierce portentous horrible sort,
 As shall appall ev'n Romans.

ELIDURUS.

Gracious Gods!

Then there are hopes indeed. O call them instant
 This Prince will lead them on: I'll follow him,
 Tho' in my Chains, and some way dash them round
 To harm the haughty foe.

ARVIRAGUS.

A thousand Britons,
 And arm'd! O instant blow the sacred trump,
 And let me head them. Yet methinks this Youth.—

CHORUS.

I know, what thou wouldst say, might join thee, Prince.
 True, were he free from crime, or had confess.

ELIDURUS.

Confess. Ah, think not, I will e'er—

ARVIRAGUS.

Reflect.

Either thyself or brother must have wrong'd us:
 Then why conceal—

ELIDURUS.

Hast thou a Brother? no!
 Else hadst thou spar'd the word; and yet a sister
 Lovely as thine might more than teach thee, Prince,
 What 'tis to have a Brother. Hear me, Druids,
 Tho' I would prize an hour of Freedom now,
 Before an age of any after date:
 Tho' I would seize it, as the gift of heav'n,

And

And use it as heaven's gift, yet do not think,
 I so will purchase it. Give it me freely,
 I yet will spurn the boon, and hug my Chains,
 'Till you do swear by your own hoary heads,
 My Brother shall be safe.

CHORUS.

Excellent Youth !

Thy words do speak thy soul, and such a soul,
 As wakes our wonder. Thou art free ; thy Brother
 Shall be thine honour's pledge ; so will we use him,
 As thou art false or true.

ELIDURUS.

I ask no other.

ARVIRAGUS.

Thus then, my fellow soldier, to thy clasp
 I give the hand of Friendship. Noble Youth,
 We'll speed, or die together.

CHORUS.

Hear us, Prince ?

Mona permits not, that he fight her battles,
 'Till duly purified : For, tho' his Soul
 Took up unwittingly this deed of baseness,
 Yet is Lustration meet. Learn that in Vice
 There is a noisome rankness unperceiv'd
 By gross corporeal sense, which so offends
 Heaven's pure Divinities, as us the stench
 Of vapour wasted from sulphureous pool,
 Or pois'nous weed obscene. Hence doth the Man,
 Who ev'n converses with a villain, need
 As much purgation as the pallid wretch
 'Scap'd from the walls, where frowning Pestilence
 Spreads wide her livid Banners. For this cause
 Ye Priests, conduct the Youth to yonder grove,
 And do the needful rites.

[Exeunt Priests with Elidurus.]

Mean while ourself

Will lead thee, Prince, unto thy Father's presence.

—But hold, the King comes forth.

CARACTACUS, ARVIRAGUS, CHORUS,
 EVILINA.

My son ! My son !

What joy, what transport, doth thine aged fire

Feel

Feel in these filial foldings ! Speak not, boy,
Nor interrupt that heart-felt ecstasy
Should strike us mute. I know what thou wouldst say.
Y-t prithee, peace. Thy sister's voice hath clear'd thee;
And could excuse find words at this blest moment,
Trust me, I'll give it vent. But, 'tis enough.
Thy father welcomes thee to him and honour :
Honour, that now with rapt'rous certainty
Calls thee his own true offspring. Dost thou weep ?
Ah, if thy tears swell not from joy's free spring,
I beg thee, spare them : I have done thee wrong,
Can make thee no atonement : None, alas !
Thy father scarce can bless thee, as he ought ;
Unblest himself, beset with Foes around,
Bereft of queen, of kingdom, and of soldiers,
He can but give thee portion of his dangers,
Perchance and of his chains : Yet droop not, boy,
Virtue is still thy own.

ARVIRAGUS.

It is, my father ;
Pure as from thine illustrious fount it came ;
And that unsullied, let the world oppress us ;
Let Fraud and Falshood rivet setters on us ;
Still shall our souls be free : Yet Hope is ours,
As well as Virtue.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Spoken like a Briton.
True, Hope is ours, and therefore let's prepare
The moments now are precious. Tell us, Druid,
Is it not meet we see the bands drawn out,
And mark their due array ?

CHORUS.

Monarch, ev'n now
They skirt the grove.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Then let us to the front.—

CHORUS.

But is the traitor-youth in safety lodg'd ?

C A R A C T A C U S.

Druid, he fled——

CHORUS.

O fatal flight to Mona !

C A R A C T A C U S

CARACTACUS.

But what of that? Arviragus is here,
 My son is here, then let the traitor go,
 By this he has join'd the Romans: Let him join them,
 A single arm, and that a villain's arm,
 Can lend but little aid to any powers
 Oppos'd to Truth and Virtue: Come, my son,
 Let's to the troops, and marshal them with speed.
 That done, we from these venerable men
 Will claim their ready blessing: Then to battle;
 And the swift sun ev'n at his purple dawn
 Shall spy us crown'd with conquest, or with death.

[Exeunt Caractacus and Arviragus.]

CHORUS, EVILINA.

What may his flight portend? Say, Evilina,
 How came this youth to 'scape?

EVILINA.

And that to tell
 Will fix much blame on my impatient folly:
 For ere your hallow'd lips had given permission,
 I flew with eager haste to bear my father
 News of his son's return. Enflam'd with that,
 Think, how a sister's zealous breast must glow!
 Your looks give mild assent. I glow'd indeed
 With the dear tale, and sped me in his ear
 To pour the precious tidings: But my tongue
 Scarce nam'd Arviragus, ere the false stranger
 (As I bethink me since) with stealthy pace
 Flew to the cavern's mouth.

CHORUS.

The king pursued?

EVILINA.

Alas! he mark'd him not, for 'twas the moment,
 When he had all to ask and all to fear,
 Touching my brother's valour. Hitherto
 His safety only, which but little mov'd him,
 Had reach'd his ears; But when my tongue unfolded
 The story of his bravery and his peril,
 O how the tears cours'd plenteous down his cheeks!
 How did he lift unto the heav'n's his hands
 In speechless transport: Yet he soon bethought him
 Of Rome's invasion, and with fiery glance

Survey'd

Survey'd the cavern round ; then snatch'd his spear,
And menac'd to pursue the flying traitor :
But I with prayers (O pardon, if they err'd)
Withheld his step, for to the left the youth
Hud wing'd his way, where the thick underwood
Afforded sure retreat. Besides, if found,
Was age a match for youth ?

CHORUS.

Maiden, enough.
Better perchance for us, if he was captive :
But in the justice of their cause, and heav'n,
Do Mona's sons confide.

BARD, CHORUS, ELIDURUS, EVILINA,
Druid, the rites
Are finish'd, all save that which crowns the rest,
And which pertains to thy blest hand alone ;
For that he kneels before thee.

CHORUS.

Take him hence,
We may not trust him forth to fight our cause.

ELIDURUS.

Now by Andraсте's throne——

CHORUS.

Nay, swear not, youth,
The tie is broke, that held thy fealty :
Thy brother's fled.

ELIDURUS.

Fled !

CHORUS.

To the Romans fled.
Yes, thou hast cause to tremble.

ELIDURUS.

Ah, Vellinus !
Does thus our love, does thus our friendship end ?
Was I thy brother, youth, and hast thou left me !
Yes, and how left me, cruel as thou art,
The victim of thy crimes !

CHORUS.

True, thou must die.

ELIDURUS.

I pray ye then on your best mercy, Fathers,
It may be speedy. I would fain be dead,

If this be life. Yet I must doubt ev'n that,
 For falshood of this strange stupendous sort
 Sets firm-ey'd Reason on a gaze, mistrusting,
 That what she sees in palpable plain form,
 The stars in yon blue arch, these woods, these caverns,
 Are all mere tricks of cozenage, nothing real,
 The vision of a vision. If he's fled,
 I ought to hate this brother.

CHORUS.

Yet thou dost not.

ELIDURUS.

But when Astonishment will give me leave,
 Perchance I shall.—And yet he is my brother,
 And he was virtuous once. Yes, ye vile Romans,
 Yes, I must die, before my thirsty sword.
 Drinks one rich drop of vengeance. Yet, ye robbers,
 Yet will I curse you with my dying lips:
 'Twas you, that stole away my brother's virtue.

CHORUS.

Now then prepare to die.

ELIDURUS.

I am prepar'd.

Yet, since I cannot now (what most I wish'd)
 By manly prowess guard this lovely maid:
 Permit that on your holiest earth I kneel,
 And pour one fervent prayer for her protection.
 Allow me this, for though you think me false,
 The gods will hear me.

EVILINA.

I can hold no longer!

O Druid, Druid, at thy feet I fall:
 Yes, I must plead (away with virgin-blushes)
 For such a youth must plead. I'll die to save him,
 O take my life, and let him fight for Mona.

CHORUS.

Virgin, arise. His virtue hath redeem'd him,
 And he shall fight for thee and for his country.
 Youth, thank us with thy deeds. The time is short,
 And now with reverence take our high lustration:
 Thrice do we sprinkle thee with day-break dew
 Shook from the May thorn blossom; twice and thrice
 Touch we thy forehead with our holy wand:

Now

Now thou art fully purg'd. Now rise restor'd
To virtue and to us. Hence then, my Son,
Hie thee to yonder altar, where our Bards
Shall arm thee duly both with helm and sword
For warlike enterprize. *[Exit Elidurus.]*

C A R A C T A C U S, C H O R U S, A R V I R A G U S,
E V I L I N A.

'Tis true, my Son,
Bold are their bearings, and I fear them not
But they have hearts will not belie their looks.
I like them well. Yet would to righteous heav'n
Those valiant Veterans, that on Snowdon guard
Their scanty pittance of bleak Liberty,
Were here to join them: we would teach these wolves,
Tho' we permit their rage to prowl our coasts,
That Vengeance waits them ere they rob our altars,
Druid, all hail! we find thy valiant guards
Accoutred so, as well bespeaks the wisdom,
That fram'd their phalanx. We but wait thy blessing
To lead them 'gainst the foe.

C H O R U S.

Caractacus!

Behold this sword: The sword of old Belinus,
Stain'd with the blood of giants, and its name
T A I F I N G U S. Many an age its charmed blade
Has slept within yon consecrated trunk.
Lo, I unsheath it, king; I wave it o'er thee;
Mark, what portentous streams of scarlet light
Flow from the brandish'd falchion. On thy knee
Receive the sacred pledge.—And mark our words.
By the bright circle of the golden Sun,
By the brief courses of the errant Moon,
By the dread potency of every Star
In the mysterious Zodiac's burning girth,
By each, and all of these supernal signs,
We do adjure thee with this trusty blade,
To guard yon central oak, whose holy stem
Involves the spirit of high Taranis:
This be thy charge; to which in aid we join
Ourselves, and our sage brethren. With our vassals
Thy son and the Brigantian prince shall make
Incurſion on the foe.

C 2 . C A R A C T A C U S.

C A R A C T A C U S.

In this, and all,
Your holy will be done. Yet surely, Druid,
The fresh and active vigour of these youths
Might better suit with this important charge.
Not that my heart shrinks at the glorious task,
But will with ready zeal pour forth its blood
Upon the sacred roots, my firmest courage
Might fail to save. Think, Fathers, I am old;
And if I fell the foremost in the onset,
Should leave a son behind, might still defend you.

C H O R U S.

The sacred adjuration we have utter'd
May never be recall'd.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Then be it so.
Yet do not think, I counsel this thro' fear:
Old as I am I trust with half our powers
I could drive back these Romans to their ships;
Dastards, that come as doth the cowering Fowler
To tangle me with snares and take me tamely;
Slaves, they shall find, that ere they gain their prey,
They have to fight it boldly with barb'd spears,
And meet such conflict, as the chased boar
Gives to his stout assailants. O ye gods!
That I might instant face them.

C H O R U S.

Be thy sons
The onset,

A R V I R A G U S.

From his soul that son doth thank ye,
Blessing the wisdom, that preserves his father.
Thus to the last. O if the fav'ring gods
Direct this arm, if their high will permit,
I pour a prosperous vengeance on the foe,
I ask for life no longer, than to crown
The valiant task. Steel then, ye powers of heav'n,
Steel my firm soul with your own fortitude,
Free from alloy of Passion. Give me courage,
That knows not rage; revenge, that knows not malice;
Let me not thirst for carnage, but for Conquest:
And, conquest gain'd, sleep vengeance in my breast,
Ere in its sheath my sword.

C A R A C.

C A R A C T A C U S.

O hear his father!
If ever rashness spur'd me on, great gods,
To acts of danger shirking for renown;
If e'er my eager soul pursued its course
Beyond just reason's limit, visit not
My faults on him. I am the thing you made me,
Vindictive, bold, precipitate, and fierce:
But as you gave to him a milder mind,
O bless him, bless him with a milder fate!

E V I L I N A.

Nor yet unheard let Evilina pour
Her pray'rs and tears. O hear a hapless maid,
That ev'n thro' half the years, her life has number'd,
Ev'n nine long years has drag'd a trembling being;
Beset with pains and perils. Give her peace;
And, to endow it more, be that blest peace
Won by her brother's sword. O bless his arm,
And bless his valiant followers. One, and all.

E L I D U R U S, *entering arm'd.*

Hear, heav'n! and let this pure and virgin prayer
Plead ev'n for Elidurus, whose sad soul
Cannot look up to your immortal thrones,
And urge his own request: Else would he ask,
That all the dangers of th' approaching fight
Might fall on him alone: That every spear
The Romans wield might at his breast be aim'd;
Each arrow darted on his rattling helm;
That so the brother of this beauteous maid,
Returning safe with victory and peace,
Might bear them to her bosom.

C H O R U S.

Now rise all,
And heav'n, that knows, what most ye ought to ask,
Grant all, ye ought to have. The stars on high
Are faded now, and darkness reigns o'er all.
Now is the dreadful hour, now will our torches
Glare with more livid horror, now our shrieks
And clanking arms will more appal the foe.
But heed, ye Bards, that for the sign of onset
Ye sound the antientest of all your rhythms,
Whose birth tradition notes not, nor who fram'd

Its lofty strains: The force of that high air
 Did Julius feel, when, fir'd by it, our fathers
 First drove him recreant to his Ships; and ill
 Had far'd his second landing, but that Fate
 Silenc'd the master Bard, who led the song.
 Now forth, brave Pair! Go, with our blessing go;
 Mute be the march, as ye ascend the hill:
 Then, when ye hear the sound of our shrill trumpet,
 Fall on the foe.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Now glory be thy guide;
 Pride of my soul, go forth and conquer.

E V I L I N A.

Brother,
 Yet one embrace. O thou much honour'd Stranger,
 I charge thee fight by my dear brother's side,
 And shield him from the foe: for he is brave,
 And will with bold and well-directed arm
 Return thy succour. *Exeunt Arviragus and Elidurus.*

C H O R U S.

Now, ye Priests,
 Strew on the altar's height your sacred leaves,
 And light the morning flame. But why is this?
 Why doth our brother Mador snatch his harp
 From yonder bough? why this way bend his step?

C A R A C T A C U S.

He is entranc'd. The fillet bursts that bound
 His liberal locks; his snowy vestments fall
 In ampler folds; and all his floating form
 Doth seem to glisten with divinity!
 Yet is he speechless. Say, thou Chief of Bards,
 What is there in this airy vacancy,
 That thou with fiery and irregular glance
 Should scan thus wildly? wherefore heaves thy breast?
 Why starts——

O D E.

I. 1.

Hark! heard ye not yon footstep dread,
 That shook the earth with thund'ring tread?
 'Twas Death — In haste
 The Warrior past;
 High tower'd his helmed head:

I mark'd

I mark'd his mail, I mark'd his shield,
I spy'd the sparkling of his spear,
I saw his giant-arm the falchion wield ;
Wide wav'd the bick'ring blade, and fir'd the angry air.

1. 2.

On me (he cry'd) my Britons, wait.
To lead you to the field of fate
I come : You car,
That cleaves the air,
Descends to throne my state !
I mount your Champion, and your God,
My proud steeds neigh beneath the throng :
Hark ! to my wheels of brass, that rattle loud !
Hark ! to my * clarion shrill, that brays the woods among !

1. 3.

Fear not now the fever's fire,
Fear not now the death-bed groan,
Pangs that torture, pains that tire,
Bed-rid age with feeble moan :
These domestic terrors wait
Hourly at my palace gate ;
And when o'er slothful realms my rod I wave,
These on the tyrant king and coward slave
Rush with vindictive rage, and drag them to their grave.

2. 1.

But you, my Sons, at this high hour
Shall share the fulness of my power :
From all your bows,
In level'd rows,
My own dread shafts shall shower.
Go then to conquest, gladly go,
Deal forth my dole of destiny,
With all my fury dash the trembling foe [tres lie.
Down to those darksome dens, where Rome's pale spec-

2. 2.

Where creeps the ninefold stream profound
Her black inexorable round,
And on the bank,
To willows dank,
The shivering ghosts are bound.
Twelve thousand crescents all shall swell

C 4

To

* Here one of the Druids blows the sacred trumpet.

To full-orb'd pride, and all decline,
 Ere they again in life's gay mansions dwell :
 Not such the meed that crowns the sons of freedom's line.

2. 3.

No, my Britons ! battle-slain,
 Rapture gilds your parting hour :
 I, that all despotic reign,
 Claim but there a moment's power.
 Swiftly the soul of British flame
 Animates some kindred frame,
 Swiftly to light and light triumphant flies,
 Exults again in martial ecstasies,
 Again for freedom fights, again for freedom dies.

C A R A C T A C U S.

It does, it does ! unconquer'd, undismay'd,
 The British soul revives—Champion, lead on,
 I follow—give me way. Some blessed shaft
 Will rid me of this clog of cumbrous age :
 And I again shall in some happier mould
 Rise to redeem my country.

C H O R U S.

Stay thee, Prince,
 And mark what clear and amber-skirted clouds
 Rise from the altar's verge, and cleave the skies :
 O 'tis a prosperous omen ! Soon expect
 To hear glad tidings.

C A R A C T A C U S.

I will send them to thee.

C H O R U S.

But see, a Bard approaches, and he bears them :
 Else is his eye no herald to his heart.

B A R D, C H O R U S, C A R A C T A C U S.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Speedily tell thy tale.

B A R D.

A tale like mine,
 I trust your ears will willingly pursue
 Thro' each glad circumstance. First Monarch, learn,
 The Roman troop is fled.

C H O R U S.

Great gods, we thank ye !

C A R A C.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Fought they not ere they fled? O tell me all.

B A R D.

Silent, as night, that wrapt us in her veil,
 We pac'd up yonder hill, whose woody ridge
 O'erhung the ambush'd foe. No sound was heard,
 Step felt, or sight descri'd, for safely hid,
 Beneath the purple pall of sacrifice
 Did sleep our holy fire, nor saw the air,
 Till to that pass we came, where whilom Brute
 Planted his five hoar altars. To our rites
 Then swift we hasted, and in one short moment
 Each rocky pile was cloth'd with livid flame.
 Near each a white-robd Druid, whose stern voice
 Thunder'd deep execrations on the foe.
 Now wak'd our horrid symphony, now all
 Our harps terrific rang: Mean while the grove
 Trembled, the altars shook, and thro' our ranks
 Our sacred sisters rush'd in sable robes,
 With hair dishevel'd and funereal brands
 Hurl'd round with menacing fury. On they rush'd
 In fierce and frantic mood, as is their wont.
 Amid the magic rites, they do to night
 In our deep dens below. Motions like these
 Were never dar'd before in open air!

C H O R U S.

Did I not say we had a power within us,
 That might appal ev'n Romans?

B A R D.

And it did.
 They stood agast, and to our vollied darts,
 That thick as hail fell on their helms and corslets,
 Scarce rais'd a warding shield. The facted trumpet
 Then rent the air, and instant at the signal
 Rush'd down Arviragus with all our vassals:
 A hot, but short-liv'd, conflict then ensued:
 For soon they fled. I saw the Romans fly,
 Before I left the field.

C A R A C T A C U S.

My son pursued?

B A R D.

The prince and Elidurus, like twin lions,
 Did side by side engage. Death seem'd to guide

Their Swords, no stroke fell fruitless, every wound
Gave him a victim.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Thus my friend Ebrancus!

Ill-fated prince! didst thou and I in youth
Unite our valours. In his prime he fell,
On Conway's banks. I saw him fall, and slew
His murderer.—But how far did they pursue?

B A R D.

Ev'n to the ships: For I descry'd the rout,
Far as the twilight gleam would aid my sight.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Now, thanks to the bright star, that rul'd his birth:
Yes, he will soon return to claim my blessing,
And he shall have it pour'd in tears of joy
On his bold breast! methought, I heard a step:
Is it not his?

B A R D.

'Tis some of our own train,
And as I think, they lead six Romans captive.

C H O R U S, C A R A C T A C U S, C A P T I V E S.

My brethren, bear the prisoners to the cavern,
Till we demand them.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Pause ye yet a while.

They seem of bold demeanor, and have helms,
That speak them leaders. Hear me, Romans, hear.
That you are captives, is the chance of war:
Yet captives as ye are, in Britain's eye
You are not slaves. Barbarians tho' you call us,
We know the native rights, man claims from man,
And therefore never shall we gall your necks
With chains, or drag you at our scythed cars
In arrogance of triumph. Nor, till taught
By Rome (what Britain sure should scorn to learn)
Her avarice, will we barter ye for gold.
True, ye are captives, and our country's safety
Forbids, we give you back to liberty:
We give ye therefore to the immortal gods,
To them we list ye in the radiant cloud
Of sacrifice. They may in limbs of freedom
Replace your free born souls, and their high mercy

Haply

Haply shall to some better world advance you;
Or else in this restore that golden gift,
Which lost, leaves life a burden. Does there breathe,
A wretch so pall'd with the vain fear of death,
Can call this cruelty? 'tis love, 'tis mercy,
And grant, ye gods, if ere I'm made a captive
I meet the like fair treatment from the foe,
Whose stronger star quells mine. Now lead them on,
And, while they live, treat them, as men should men,
And not, as Rome treats Britain. [*Exeunt Captives.*
Druid, these,

Ev'n should their chief escape, may blaze to-morrow
Our gratitude—Whence was that shriek?

EVILINA, CARACTACUS, CHORUS.

My father,

Support me, take me trembling to your arms;

All is not well. Ah me, my fears o'ercome me!

CARACTACUS.

What means my child?

EVILINA.

Alas! we are betray'd.

Ev'n now, as wandering in yon eastern grove

I call'd the gods to aid us, the dread sound

Of many hasty steps did meet mine ear:

This way they press.

CARACTACUS.

Daughter, thy fears are vain.

EVILINA.

Methought I saw the flame of lighted brands,

And what did glitter to my dazzled sight,

Like swords and helms.

CARACTACUS.

All, all the feeble coinage

Of maiden fear.

EVILINA.

Nay, if mine ear mistook not,

I heard the traitor's voice, who that way scap'd,

Calling to arms.

CARACTACUS.

Away with idle terrors!

Know, thy brave brother's crest is crown'd with conquest,

The Romans fled, their leaders are our captives.

Smile, my lov'd child, and imitate the sun, That

60 CARACTACUS.

That rises ruddy from behind yon oaks
To hail him victor.

CHORUS.

That the rising sun!
O horror! horror! sacrilegious fires
Devour our groves: They blaze, they blaze! O sound
The trump again; recall the prince, or all
Is lost!

CARACTACUS.

Druid, where is thy fortitude?
Do not I live? Is not this holy sword
Firm in my grasp? I will preserve your groves.
Britons, I go: Let those that dare die nobly;
Follow my step. [Exit Caractacus.

EVILINA.

O whither does he go?
Return, return: Ye holy men, recall him.
What is his arm against a host of Romans?
O I have lost a father!

CHORUS.

Ruthless gods!
Ye take away our souls: A general panic
Reigns thro' the grove, O fly, my brethren, fly,
To aid the king, fly to preserve your altars!
Alas! 'tis all in vain; our fate is fixt.
Look there, look there, thou miserable maid!
Behold thy bleeding brother.

ARVIRAGUS, ELIDURUS, EVILINA, CHORUS.

Thanks, good youth:
Safe hast thou brought me to that holy spot,
Where I did wish to die. Support me still:
O, I am sick to death. Yet one step more:
Now lay me gently down. I would drag out
This life, tho' at some cost of throbs and pangs,
Just long enough to claim my father's blessing,
And sigh my last breath in my sister's arms.
—And here she kneels, poor maid! all dumb with grief.
Restrain thy sorrow, gentlest Evilina,
True thou dost see me bleed; I bleed to death.

EVILINA.

Say'st thou to death? O gods! the barbed shaft

Is buried in his breast. Yes, he must die;
And I, alas! am doom'd to see him die.
Where are your healing arts, medicinal herbs,
Ye holy men, your wonder-working spells?
Pluck me but out this shaft, staunch but this blood,
And I will call down blessings on your heads
With such a fervency.—And can you not!
Then let me beg you on my bended knee,
Give to my misery some opiate drug,
May shut up all my senses.—Yes, good fathers,
Mingle the potion so, that it may kill me
Just at the instant, this poor languisher
Heaves his last sigh.

ARVIRAGUS.

Talk not thus wildly, sister,
Think on our father's age.——

EVILINA.

Alas! my brother!
We have no father now; or if we have,
He is a captive.

ARVIRAGUS.

Captive! O my wound!
It stings me now.—But is it so?

[turning to the Chorus.]

CHORUS.

Alas!
We know no more, save that he sallied single
To meet the foe, whose unexpected host
Round by the east had wound their fraudulent march,
And fir'd our groves.

ELIDURUS.

O fatal, fatal valour!
Then is he seiz'd, or slain.

ARVIRAGUS.

Too sure he is!
Druid, not half the Romans met our swords;
We found the fraud too late: the rest are yonder.

CHORUS.

How could they gain the pass?

ARVIRAGUS.

The wretch, that fled
That way, return'd, conducting half their powers;
And

And——But thy pardon, youth, I will not wound thee,
He is thy brother.

ELIDURUS.

Thus my honest sword
Shall force the blood from the detested heart,
That holds alliance with him.

ARVIRAGUS.

Elidurus,
Hold, on our friendship, hold. Thou, noble youth,
Look on this innocent maid. She must to Rome,
Captive to Rome: Thou seest warm life flow from me,
Ere long she'll have no brother. Heav'n's my witness,
I do not wish, that thou shouldst live the slave
Of Rome: But yet she is my sister.

ELIDURUS.

Prince,
Thou urgest that, might make me drag an age
In fetters worse than Roman. I will live,
And while I live——

Enter BARD.

Fly to your caverns, Druids,
The grove's beset around. The chief approaches.

CHORUS.

Let him approach, we will confront his pride,
The chief that rules amid the groves of Mona
Has not to fear his fury. What tho' age
Slackens our sinews; what tho' shield, and sword,
Give not their iron aid to guard our body;
Yet virtue arms our soul, and 'gainst that panoply
What 'vails the rage of robbers. Let him come.

ARVIRAGUS.

I faint apace.——Ye venerable men,
If ye can save this body from pollution,
If ye can tomb me in this sacred place,
I trust, ye will. I fought to save these groves,
And, fruitless tho' I fought, some grateful oak,
I trust, will spread its reverential gloom
O'er my pale ashes.——Ah! that pang was death!
My sister, Oh!——

[*dies.*]

ELIDURUS.

She faints! Ah raise her!——

EVILINA.

Yes,
Now he is dead. I felt his spirit go
In a cold sigh, and as it past, methought
It paus'd a while, and trembled on my lips!
Take me not from him: Breathless as he is,
He is my brother still, and if the Gods
Do please to grace him with some happier being,
They ne'er can give to him a sonder sister.

CHORUS.

Brethren, surround the corse, and, ere the foe
Approaches, chaunt with meet solemnity
That grateful dirge your dying champion claims.

SEMICHORUS.

Lo, where incumbent o'er the shade
Rome's ravening eagle bows her beaked head!
Yet while a moment fate affords.
While yet a moment freedom stays,
That moment, which outweighs
Eternity's unmeasur'd hoards,
Shall Mona's grateful Bards employ
To hymn their godlike Hero to the sky.

SEMICHORUS.

Ring out, ye mortal strings;
Answer, thou heav'nly harp, instinct with spirit all,
That o'er the jasper arch self-warbling swings
Of blest Andraſte's throne:
Thy sacred sounds alone
Can celebrate the fall

Of bold Arviragus— [*Enter Aulus Didius and Romans.*
AULUS DIDIUS, CHORUS, EVILINA, ELIDURUS.

Ye bloody priests,
Behold, we burst on your infernal rites,
And bid ye pause. Instant restore our soldiers,
Nor hope that superstition's ruthless step,
Shall wade in Roman gore. Ye savage men,
Did not our laws give licence to all faiths,
We would o'erturn your altars, headlong heave
These shapeless symbols of your barbarous gods,
And let the golden sun into your caves.

CHORUS.

Servant of Cæsar, has thine impious tongue
Spent the black venom of thy blasphemy?

It

It has. Then take our curses on thine head,
 Ev'n his fell curses, who doth reign in Mona
 Vicegerent of those gods thy pride insults.

AULUS DIDIUS.

Bold priest, I scorn thy curses and thyself.
 Soldiers, go search the caves, and free the prisoners,
 Take heed, ye seize Caractacus alive.
 Arrest yon youth; load him with heaviest irons,
 He shall to Cæsar answer for his crime.

ELIDURUS.

I stand prepar'd to triumph in my crime!

AULUS DIDIUS.

'Tis well, proud boy. —————

Look to the beauteous maid, [to the soldiers.]
 That tranc'd in grief bends o'er yon bleeding corpse,
 Respect her sorrows.

EVILINA.

Hence, ye barbarous men,
 Ye shall not take him weltring thus in blood
 To shew at Rome, what British virtue was.
 Avaunt! The breathless body that you touch
 Was once Arviragus!

AULUS DIDIUS.

Fear us not, princess,
 We reverence the dead.

CHORUS.

Would too to heav'n,
 Ye reverenc'd the gods but ev'n enough.
 Not to debase with slavery's cruel chain,
 What they created free.

AULUS DIDIUS.

The Romans fight
 Not to enslave, but humanize the world.

CHORUS.

Go too, we will not parley with thee, Roman:—
 Instant pronounce our doom.

AULUS DIDIUS.

Hear it, and thank us.

This once our clemency shall spare your groves,
 If at our call ye yield the British king:
 Yet learn, when next ye aid the foes of Cæsar,
 That each old oak, whose solemn gloom ye boast,
 Shall bow beneath our axes.

CHORUS.

CHORUS.

Be they blasted,
Whene'er their shade forgets to shelter virtue.

Enter BARD.

Mourn, Mona, mourn. Caractacus is captive !
And dost thou smile, false Roman ? do not think
He fell an easy prey. Know, ere he yielded,
Thy bravest Veterans bled. He too, thy spy,
The base Brigantian prince, hath seal'd his fraud
With death. Bursting thro' armed ranks, that hemm'd
The caitiff round, the brave Caractacus
Seiz'd his false throat ; and as he gave him death
Indignant thunder'd, ' Thus is my last stroke
' The stroke of Justice.' Numbers then oppress him :
I saw the slave, that cowardly behind
Pinion'd his arms ; I saw the sacred sword
Writh'd from his grasp ; I saw, what now ye see,
Inglorious fight ! those barbarous bonds upon him.

CARACTACUS, AULUS DIDIUS, CHORUS, &c.

Romans, methinks the malice of your tyrant
Might furnish heavier chains. Old as I am
And wither'd as ye see these war worn limbs,
Trust me, they shall support the weightiest load
Injustice dares impose.

Proud-crested Soldier !

[To Didius.]

Who seem't the master-mover in this business,
Say, dost thou read less terror on my brow,
Than when thou met'st me in the Fields of war
Heading my nations ? No my free-born soul
Has scorn still left to sparkle thro' these eyes,
And frown defiance on thee.

Is it thus !

[seeing his Son's Body.]

Then I'm indeed a captive. Mighty gods !
My soul, my soul submits : Patient it bears
The pondrous load of grief ye heap upon it
Yes, it will grovel in this shatter'd breast,
And be the sad tame thing, it ought to be
Coopt in a servile body.

AULUS DIDIUS.

Droop not, king.

When Claudius, the great Master of the world,

Shall

66 C A R A C T A C U S.

Shall hear the noble story of thy valour,
His pity——

C A R A C T A C U S.

Can a Roman pity, soldier ?
And if he can, gods ! must a Briton bear it ?
Arviragus, my bold, my breathless boy,
Thou hast escap'd such pity : thou art free.
Here in high Mona shall thy noble limbs
Rest in a noble grave ; posterity
Shall to thy Tomb with annual reverence bring
Sepulchral stones, and pile them to the clouds :
Whilst mine——

A U L U S D I D I U S.

The morn doth hasten our departure.
Prepare thee, king, to go : A fav'ring gale
Now swells our sails.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Inhuman, that thou art !
Dost thou deny a moment for a father
To shed a few warm tears o'er his dead son ?
I tell thee, chief, this act might claim a life
To do it duly ; even a longer life,
Than sorrow ever suffer'd. Cruel man !
And thou deniest me moments. Be it so.
I know you Romans weep not for your children ;
You triumph o'er your tears, and think it valour :
I triumph in my tears. Yes, best lov'd boy,
Yes, I can weep, can fall upon thy corse,
And I can tear my hairs, these few gray hairs,
The only honours war and age have left me.
Ah ! son, thou might'st have rul'd o'er many nations,
As did thy royal ancestry : but I,
Rash that I was, ne'er knew the golden curb,
Discretion hangs on brav'ry : Else perchance
These men, that fasten fetters on thy father,
Had sued to him for peace, and claim'd his friendship.

A U L U S D I D I U S.

But thou wast still implacable to Rome,
And scorn'd her friendship.

C A R A C T A C U S *starting from the body.*

Soldier, I had arms,
Had neighing steeds to whirl my iron cars.

Had

C A R A C T A C U S. 67

Had wealth, dominion. Dost thou wonder, Roman,
I fought to save them ? What if Cæsar aims
To lord it universal o'er the world,
Shall the world tamely crouch at Cæsar's footstool ?

AULUS DIDIVS.

Read in thy fate our answer. Yet if sooner
Thy pride had yielded——

C A R A C T A C U S.

Thank thy gods, I did not.
Had it been so, the glory of thy master,
Like my misfortunes, had been short and trivial,
Oblivion's ready prey : Now after struggling
Nine years, and that right bravely 'gainst a tyrant,
I am his slave to treat as seems him good ;
If cruelly, 'twill be an easy task
To bow a wretch, alas ! how bow'd already !
Down to the dust : If well, his clemency,
When trick'd and varnish'd by your glossing penmen,
Will shine in honour's annals, and adorn
Himself ; it boots not me. Look there, look there,
The slave that shot that dart, left not a hope
For lost Caractacus ! Arise, my daughter.
Alas ! poor prince ; art thou too in vile fetters ?

[to Elidorus.]

Come hither, youth : Be thou to me a son,
To her a brother. Thus with trembling arms
I lead ye forth ; children, we go to Rome.
Weep'st thou, my girl ? I prithee hoard thy tears
For the sad meeting of thy captive mother :
For we have much to tell her, much to say
Of these good Men who nurtur'd us in Mona ;
Much of the fraud and malice that pursued us ;
Much of her son who pour'd his precious blood
To save his fire and sister : Think'st thou, maid,
Her gentleness can hear the tale, and live ?
And yet she must. O gods, I grow a talker !
Grief and old age are ever full of words :
But I'll be mute. Adieu ! ye holy men ;
Yet one look more—Now lead us hence for ever.

T H E E N D.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

THE few following quotations, from ancient authors, are here thrown together, in order to support and explain some Passages in the Drama, that respect the manners of the Druids; and which the general account of their customs, to be found in our histories of Britain, does not include.

P. 8. v. 12.

On the left,

Beside the *sages skill'd in nature's lore.

*i. e. The Euvates; one of the three classes of the Druids, according to Am. Marcellinus. *Studia liberalium doctrinarum inchoata per Bardos, Euvates, & Druidas.* This class, Strabo tells us, had the care of the sacrifices, and studied natural philosophy; which here, by *the changeful universe*, is shown to be on Pythagorean principles. Whenever the *Priests* are mentioned in the subsequent parts of the Drama, this order of men is intended to be meant, as distinguished from the Druids and Bards.

Page 11 v. 18.

Thou shalt live;

Yet shalt thou live an interdicted wretch,

All rights of nature cancell'd.

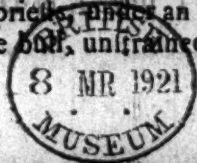
Alluding to the Druidical power of excommunication, mentioned by Cæsar. *Si quis aut privatus, aut publicus, eorum decreto non stetit, sacrificiis interdicunt. Hæc poena apud eos est gravissima. Quibus ita est interdictum, ii numero impiorum ac sceleratorum habentur—neque iis petentibus jus redditur, neque honos ullus communicatur.* C. Comment. Lib. vi.

P. 13. v. 15.

Are the milk white steers prepar'd.

In the minute description which Pliny gives us of the ceremony of gathering the mistletoe, he tells us, they sacrificed two white Bulls. See Pliny's Natural History; L. 16. c. 44. which Drayton, in his Polyolbion, thus verifies. Sometimes within my shades, in many an ancient wood, Whose often-twined tops great Phœbus' fires withstood, The fearless British priests, under an aged oak, Taking a milk-white bull, unframed with the yoke,

And



And with an ax of gold, from that Jove-sacred tree
 The mistletoe cut down; then with a bended knee
 On th' unbew'd altar laid, put to the hallow'd fires;
 And whilst in the sharp flame the trembling flesh expires,
 As their strong fury mov'd (when all the rest adore)
 Pronouncing their desires the sacrifice before,
 Up to th' eternal heav'n their bloodied hands did rear:
 And whilst the murm'ring woods ev'n shudder'd as with
 fear,

Preach'd to the beardless youth the Soul's immortal state;
 To other bodies still how it should transmigrate,
 That to contempt of death them strongly did excite.

Ninth Song.

Page 13. V. 34.

Where our matron sister dwells.

The existence of female Druids seems ascertained by Tacitus, in his description of the final destruction of Mona by Paulinus Suetonius. *Stabat pro litore diversa acies densa armis virisque intercurrentibus feminis, &c.* Also by the known story of Dioclesian, on which Fletcher formed a play, called the Prophets.

Page 14. V. 1.

And the potent adder-stone.

The ovum anguinum, or serpent's egg; a famous Druidical amulet, thus circumstantially described by Pliny.—*Præterea est ovorum genus in magna Galliarum fama, omissum Græcis. Angues innumeri ætate convoluti, salivæ faucium corporumque spumæ artificum complexu glomerantur; anguinum appellatur. Druidæ sibilis id dicunt in sublime jactari, sagoque oportere intercipi, ne telurem attingat. Profugere raptorem equo, serpentes enim insequi, donec arceantur amnis alicujus interventu, &c.* Nat. Hist. Lib. xxix. cap. 3.

There are remains of this superstition still, both in the north and west parts of our island. For Lhwyd, the author of the Archeologia, writes thus to Rowland; see *Mona Antiqua*, p. 338. "The Druid doctrine about the *Glain Naid*, obtains very much thro' all Scotland, as well lowlands as highlands; but there is not a word of it in this kingdom (Ireland); where, as there are no snakes, they could not propagate it. Besides snake-stones, the highlanders have their snail-stones, paddock-stones, &c.

“ &c. to all which they attribute their several virtues,
 “ and wear them as amulets.” And in another letter
 he writes, “ the Cornish retain variety of charms, and
 “ have still, towards the land’s end, the amulet of
 “ Maen Magal, and Glain Neidr, which latter they
 “ call a Milpreu, or Melpreu, and have a charm for the
 “ snake to make it, when they have found one asleep,
 “ and struck a hazel wand in the centre of her spires.”

Page 24. V. 5.

Have the milk white steeds

Unrein’d, and, neighing, pranc’d with fav’ring steps.

The few and imperfect accounts antiquity gives us of
 ceremonies, &c. which are unquestionably Druidical,
 makes it necessary in this, and in other places of the
 Drama, to have recourse to Tacitus’s account of the
 Germans, amongst whom, if there were really no estab-
 lished Druids, there was certainly a great corresponden-
 cy, in religious opinions, with the Gauls and Britons.
 The passage here alluded to is taken from his 10th chap-
 ter. *Proprium gentis, equorumque quoque præsentia
 ac monitus experiri. Publice aluntur iisdem nemoribus
 ac lucis, candidi & nullo mortali opere contacti, quos
 pressos sacro curru, sacerdos ac rex, vel princeps civi-
 tatis comitantur, hinnitus & fremitus observant, nec
 ulli auspicio major fides non solum apud plebem, sed
 apud proceres, apud sacerdotes.*

Page 24. V. 28.

Thou art a king, a sov’reign o’er frail man:

I am a Druid, servant of the gods.

Such service is above such sovereignty.

The supreme authority of the Druids over their
 kings, is thus ascertained by Dion. Chrysostom. *Καὶ τοὶ
 δι οὓς ὀνομαζοῦσι Δρυΐδας, καὶ τούτοις περὶ Μαντικὴν ὄντας καὶ
 τῇ ᾄλλῃ Σοφίᾳ, ὡς αὐτοὶ, τοῖς βασιλεῦσιν ὅτι ἐξ αὐτῶν
 ὡς βαλεῖσθαι, ὡς τὸ μὴ ἀληθεῖς ἐκινῆσαι ἀρχῇ τοὺς δι βασιλείας,
 αὐτῶν ὑπηρετας καὶ διακόνους γίνεσθαι τῆς γυνῆς, καὶ θρόνους
 καθήμενους, καὶ οἰκίας μεγάλας οἰκοντάς, καὶ πολυτιμῶς ἐν-
 χρομένους.* Helmodus also de Slavis. l. ii. c. 12. asserts,
*Rex apud eos modicæ est æstimationis in comparatione
 flaminis.*

Page 25. V. 9.

The time shall come, when destiny and death.

Thron’d in a burning car,

Strabo,

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Strabo, and other writers, tell us, the Druids taught, that the world was finally to be destroyed by fire ; upon which this allegory is founded.

Page 30. §. 20.

The gods, my brethren,
Have wak'd these doubts in the untainted breast
Of this mild maiden.

Inesse enim sanctum quid & providum sceminis putant.
Nec aut consilia ipsorum aspernantur, aut responsa negant.
Tac. de morib. Germ. and Strabo to the like purpose, l. vii.
Ακατίς γὰρ τῆς διουδαϊσμοῦ ἀρχῆς οἰοῦνται τὰς γυναῖκας.

Page 33. §. 26.

Behold yon huge
And unhewn sphere of living adamant.

This is meant to describe the rocking stone, of which there are several still to be seen in Wales, Cornwall, and Derbyshire. They are universally thought, by antiquarians to be Druid monuments ; and Mr. Toland thinks, " that the Druids made the people believe that they only " could move them, and that by a miracle, by which they " condemned or acquitted the accused, and often brought " criminals to confess what could in no other way be extorted from them." 'Twas this conjecture which gave the hint for this piece of machinery. The reader may find a description of one of these rocking-stones in Camden's Britannia, in his account of Pembrokeshire ; and also several in Borlase's history of Cornwall.

Page 51. §. 21.

— And its name

TRIFINGUS.

The name of the enchanted sword in the Hervarer Saga.

Page 51 §. 28.

By the bright circle of the golden sun.

This adjuration is taken from the literal form of the old Druidical oath, which they administered to their disciples ; and which the learned Selden, in Prolog. de Diis Syr. gives us from Vettius Valens Antiochenus, l. vii. It is as follows: ΕΥΤΥΧΑΙΟΝΤΑΣ ΟΡΧΙΖΩ ΗΛΙΟΥ ΜΗΝ ΠΡΟΝ ΚΥΚΛΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΣΕΛΗΝΗΝ ΑΝΩΜΑΛΟΥΣ ΔΡΟΜΗΣ ΤΩΝ ΤΙ ΛΟΙΠΩΝ ΑΣΤΕΡΩΝ ΔΥΝΑΜΕΙΣ ΚΑΙ ΚΥΚΛΟΝ ΔΥΟΚΑΙΔΕΚΑ ΖΩΔΙΩΝ ΕΙ ΑΠΟΚΡΕΥΦΟΙΣ ΤΑΥΤΑ ΙΧΙΩ ΚΑΙ ΤΟΙΣ ΑΠΑΙΔΕΥΤΟΙΣ Η ΑΜΗΝΤΟΙΣ ΜΗ ΜΕΤΑ ΔΙΔΟΝΑΙ, ΤΙΜΗΝ ΤΙ ΚΑΙ ΜΗΜΗΝ ΤΩ ΕΙΣΠΗΓΗΣΑΜΕΝΩ ΑΠΟΝΗΜΩ, &c.

Page

Page 57. v. 13.

Near each a white-rob'd Druid, whose stern voice
Thunder'd deep execrations on the foe.

This account is taken from what history tells us did really happen some years after, when the groves of Mona were destroyed by Suetonius Paulinus. *Igitur Monam insulam incolis validam, & receptaculum perfugarum agredi parat, navesque fabricatur plano alveo, adversus breve litus & incertum. Sic Pedes; equites vado secuti, aut altiores inter undas, adnantes equis transnitere. Stabat pro litore diversa acies densa armis virisque, intercurrentibus foeminis: in modum Furiarum, veste ferali crinibus dejectis facies præferebant. Druidæ circum, preces diras sublati ad cælum manibus fundentes, novitate aspectus percolere milites aut quasi hærentibus membris, immobile corpus vulneribus præberent. Dein cohortationibus ducis, & se ipsi stimulantes ne muliebres & fanaticum agmen pavefcerent, inferunt signa, sternuntque obvios & igni suo involvunt. Tac. Ann. l. xiv. c. 29.*

Page 63. v. 35.

These shapelss symbols of your barbarous gods.

The Druids did not really worship the divinity under any symbol. But this is put intentionally into the mouth of the Roman, as mistaking the Rude stones placed round the grove, for idols. Thus Lucan in his beautiful description of a Druid grove.

— simulacraque mæsta deorum

Arte carent cæsisque extant informia truncis.

Phar. lib. iii.

Some imagery from the same description is also borrowed in the opening of the Drama.

P. 66. v. 36.

— Soldier, I had arms.

This passage, and some others in this scene, are taken from Caractacus's famous speech in Tacitus, before the throne of Claudius: but here adapted to his dramatic character.

